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The Editors
"THE MONASTERY"

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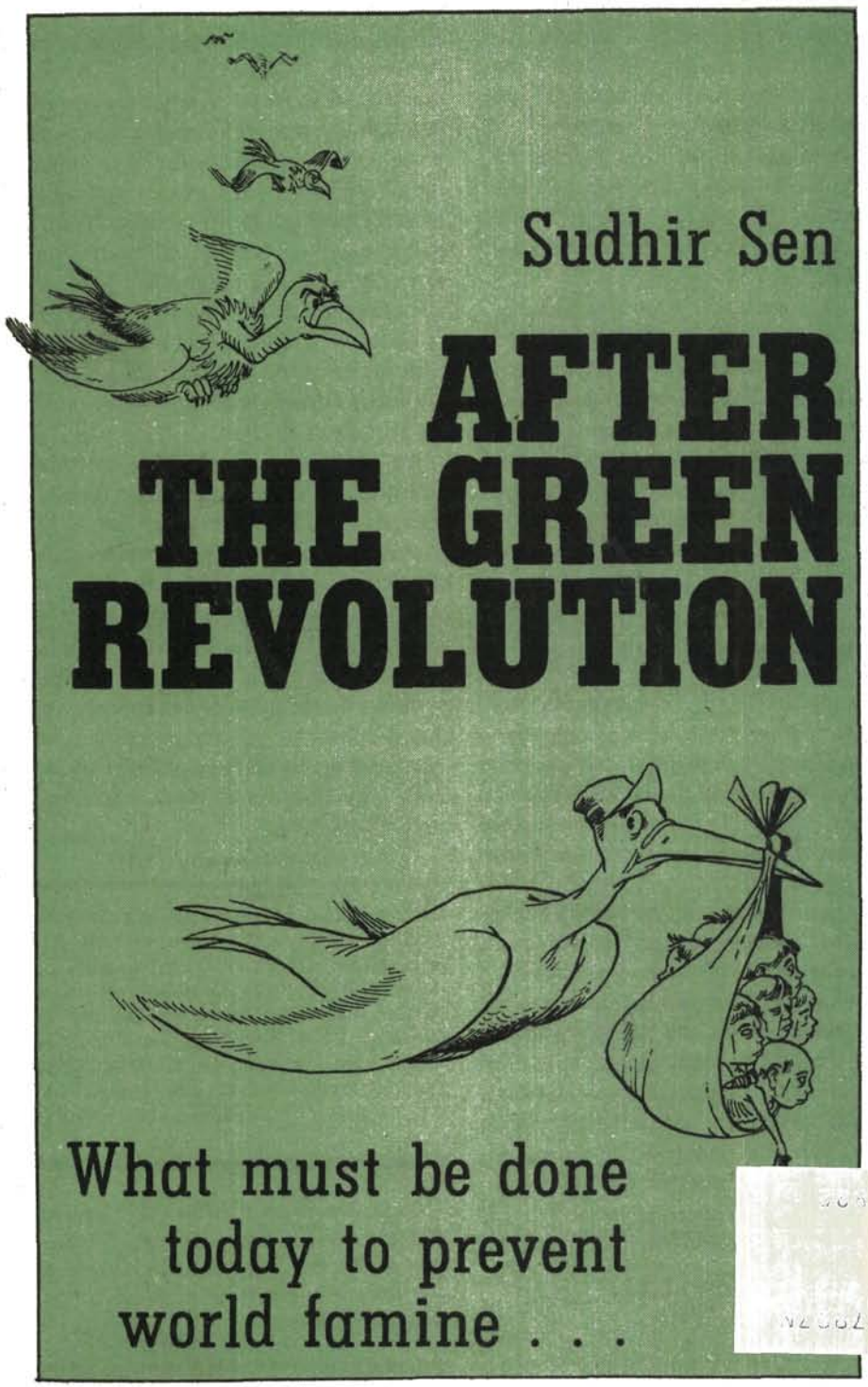

Sudhir Sen

AFTER THE GREEN REVOLUTION

What must be done today to prevent world famine . . .

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Correspondence

Defining life, yes

Mt. Ranier, Md.

To the Editors: John Garvey's reasoning in a recent article that Congress should not define when human life and/or personhood begins with respect to pre-natal human beings because such an action establishes a precedent which invites definitions that could produce new Holocausts does not withstand scrutiny [June 19]. First, no matter what Congress does, just as the Supreme Court in fact did in its 1973 decisions, it in effect makes a judgment as to when human life and/or personhood begins by its decision as to when to extend legal protection of the right to life to members of our species.

Second, Mr. Garvey misses or ignores the crucial difference in the intent of human life legislation, whether it be statute or constitutional amendment. In defining human zygotes, embryos, and/or fetuses as human beings with legitimate claim to legal protection of their continued existence, Congress would be *expanding* the range so covered. Its intent is *in*clusive, then, rather than exclusive, which is the kind of intent that produces the type of problems Mr. Garvey alludes to.

In this respect, comments made by Sen. Mark Hatfield in 1974 before the Senate Subcommittee on Constitutional Amendments during hearings on proposed HLAs are very apt. He said:

> The Supreme Court in its Wade and Bolton decisions set limits to the legal definition of personhood — limits which cannot be justified by fundamental biological reality. The court, and our nation, have dealt in the past with the legal definition of personhood. The truth of history is that the most tragic consequences have directly resulted when we, or another nation, have taken a too restrictive view of personhood and the value of human life. The institution of slavery, reducing human beings to the level of economic commodities, the ovens of Auschwitz and the slaughter at all the My Lais of Indochina demonstrate what becomes possible, tolerable, and even legal from a philosophy of human life and personhood too narrowly perceived. The nation's definition of personhood, as set forth by its system of law, has potentially profound and crucial consequences on the rights of every citizen. To set a legal precedent for restricting the view of personhood according to certain artificial criteria is to open the way for the abuse of our most fundamental and treasured ideals.
>
> It is difficult to bring to mind an advocate of justice whom history has condemned for a too "liberal" view of the range of human life and personhood.
>
> The point is this: what the lessons of history teach us is that where societies have erred, they have erred on the side of bigotry and narrow-mindedness. They have more often than not erred in the direction of failing to grant rights where those rights were subsequently recognized to be legitimate.

CHRISTOPHER McGATH

What sort of life?

Sagaponack, N.Y.

To the Editors: I must take exception to John Garvey's thoughtful, but questionable comments on the issue of abortion [June 19]. "The ordinary pro-choice argument assumes that there is no intrinsic value to life," Garvey wrote. "Value is given, or withheld, by human beings. It is not a quality which is inherent in the fact of our having been conceived."

What Mr. Garvey suggests is that all life is God-given and therefore sacred. But what he is really saying is that all *human* life is sacred, and lesser animals whose biological beginnings duplicate those of human beings, are not so sacred. There is no doubt in Mr. Garvey's argument that man, conceived by God's will, is then perfectly justified in changing the rules and bestowing — or withholding — such "intrinsic values" on the lives of others. To Mr. Garvey, this argument represents a comfortable leap of faith. To me, it is elitist hypocrisy. How can there be more — or less — mystery in a woman conceiving a child than in a cow conceiving a calf? The "miracle of birth" cannot be restricted to human beings alone, no matter how superior we like to think we are.

What really differentiates man from other animals and makes us truly unique is our foreknowledge of mortality, our capacity for long-term caring, for intellectualizing, for reasoning. And it is in this capacity, whether God-given or not, that those who opt for abortion are caught between the proverbial rock and a hard place. Of course there is life, a potential for life, the beginnings of a human being in a fertilized egg which successfully implants itself on the uterine wall. But foresight is also a unique and burdensome human quality, and the knowledge of what sort of independent existence this "life potential" will be born into governs a woman's decision to abort — or carry her pregnancy to term.

An unwanted child suffers. A child born into chronic poverty suffers. A child who is maimed by genetic defects suffers. A child who is the result of incest or rape faces parental — and societal — rejection. And to choose not to inflict such worldly tragedies on an innocent is an act of love, not of murder. We all like to think of ourselves as the children of God, yet there are presently six thousand legally adoptable children of God in New York City institutions alone. And nobody wants them.

(Continued on page 510)

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CAN LABOR COME BACK?

IT WAS A very fitting gesture for Poland's independent trade union to invite Lane Kirkland, president of the AFL-CIO, to attend the opening of Solidarity's first national congress the weekend before America's Labor Day. It is a hundred years now since the AFL was founded, a century of struggle, of ups and downs, false starts and reversals, bitter defeats and yet the overall accomplishment of seeing American working people rescued from a regime of arbitrariness and possessed of a degree of job protection, collective benefits, the dignity of self-organization and negotiated rather than imposed contracts, and, of course, a fairer share in the material prosperity based so largely on their own toil. The celebration of this anniversary is undeniably muted, however. Organized labor in the United States is on the defensive — a few observers might even say "on the ropes." The latter would be a misleading exaggeration, but the contrast with the élan of Poland's Solidarity is striking. There, it seems, the independent, democratic organization of working people is the creative force in shaping a new society, and doing so under the most hazardous of economic and political conditions. Here, it seems, the labor movement is engaged in a dramatically unsuccessful holding action against a government that is consciously embarked on a plan to redistribute wealth and decision-making power away from wage-earners and into the hands of the wealthier classes. To be sure, the government believes that the growing economic "pie" it anticipates as a consequence of this redistribution will improve the lot of the worker as well. But so far the labor movement remains thoroughly unpersuaded — and just as thoroughly unable to do anything about it.

The decline in organized labor's political power was apparent as far back as 1977 when the bill to legalize common-site picketing, a labor goal for twenty-five years, was defeated by a coalition that included post-Watergate Democrats as well as Republican and Southern conservatives. A year later, federal labor law reform, a measure crucial to the unions' ability to accompany the labor force in its shift toward the Sunbelt, was successfully blocked by a conservative filibuster. Those votes were relatively close but, coming under a Democratic administration, a portent nonetheless.

In politics the appearance of weakness *is* weakness, and nothing has turned the spotlight on organized labor's weakness like the strike of the air traffic controllers. The problems that Patco's action presented to the rest of the union movement are obvious. The strike was clearly illegal, however arbitrary the situation (unlike that of government workers in Western Europe, and now Poland!) which makes it against the law for controllers to close down an airport but not for pilots or mechanics to do so. Secondly, the strike was ill-prepared, called without carefully plotting the consequences and consulting potential allies. Thirdly, the union was not exactly in good repute with other labor bodies, having endorsed Reagan last fall in

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return for the candidate's assurance that "if I am elected president, I will take whatever steps are necessary to provide our air traffic controllers with the most modern equipment available and to adjust staff levels and work days so that they are commensurate with achieving a maximum degree of public safety." And finally it is more than a little sticky asking hard-pressed American workers to rally to the cause of strikers who have been averaging $33,000 in yearly wages and want more for less time on the job. For all of that, the challenge that the president's policy presents to the labor movement is enormous. In not merely resisting Patco's demands but in sacking all the striking workers and decertifying the union, with no hint of compromise in the offing, Mr. Reagan has given the White House stamp of approval to an already existing trend toward union-busting. From London, the *Economist*, which approves of the president's toughness, has seen the larger meaning of this episode: "The long-term implication is that the controllers' defeat could hasten America's drift towards an almost union-free society."

One effort at redressment will be made on September 19, two weeks after the opening of Solidarity's congress in Poland and under the same banners. For the first time in history, the AFL-CIO has called for a march on Washington, a mass mobilization in the nation's capital under the name Solidarity Day. The point of this mobilization by labor and its allies is to demonstrate the depth of *active* American support for social and economic justice — to protest the administration's slashes in human services; its removal of restraints on industry; its bias toward the rich in tax cuts; its "let-them-eat-cake" attitude toward the cities, mass transit, hard-pressed educational systems, and the poor; its relaxation of federal concern about minority rights and equal treatment for women; its lop-sided emphasis on military spending. An astonishing array of organizations — liberal and radical groups, consumer lobbies, environmental watchdogs, peace groups, women's organizations, minority representatives, and many more — are backing Solidarity Day, a sign that long-standing suspicions between labor and middle-class activists may be disappearing under the pressure of the Reagan program.

But it will take more than one march on Washington, no matter how successful, to restore labor even to the role it had a few years ago in representing the needs of masses of ordinary people, let alone render it a creative force in the reshaping of America that, like it or not, is now underway.

Obviously, a revitalized labor movement will have to demonstrate that solidarity is not a sometime thing. The *Economist*'s report on the air traffic controllers' strike was tellingly printed under the headline: "Solidarity is not a word America's unions know." Some united response to the government's policy of no-compromise/everyone-fired must be forthcoming from the AFL-CIO. Beyond that, the coalition-building marking Solidarity Day should become a permanent part of labor's strategy. Aware of its own preeminent role as an institutionalized force for social change, it has too often preferred to go it alone, and the contempt for unions (or just plain ignorance of them) that has pockmarked many middle-class reform efforts has been returned in full measure by labor.

Many of the unions, and the AFL-CIO as a whole, have recognized the need to refurbish their political efforts—to get involved in Democratic (and sometimes Republican) party politics at earlier stages, to make the most of the new mailing and polling political technology. Furthermore, the positions that labor leaders have staked out on a host of national issues are distinctive—far from the "me-tooism" of which they are occasionally accused. Still, labor has simply not been able to mold these positions into some general alternative vision of America, able to compete with the rugged individualism *cum* nostalgia and nationalism that is now serving both cultural and economic conservatives so well. Labor has rightly prided itself on representing those many Americans who, at least in the terms of the national media, are relatively inarticulate. But this representation, in the end, demands not just muscle but *articulation*—articulation of a vision that links self-interest to the common good. Business has learned this lesson: it is setting up think tanks, enlisting scholars (and giving them the leeway to make them feel comfortable), sponsoring debates on public policy, inundating the media with material that carries a strong pro-business bias and yet is more than simple propaganda. (The *Wall Street Journal* is known for its excellent reporting as well as its editorial viewpoint—and the former, not the latter, has made it the largest circulation paper in America. Has the labor movement ever considered publishing a daily or weekly in which independent, competent coverage of the economy was matched with *its* point of view?)

All the elements are available for labor to articulate that alternative vision. Its defense of the New-Deal and Great-Society "safety net" should be seen not as a knee-jerk attachment to federal bureaucracies nor as mere do-goodism but for what it is: a realistic recognition that most Americans are always economically *vulnerable* even when they are momentarily well off. The most careful study of the matter shows that although only a tenth of American families (*only!*) may be permanently mired in poverty, over every eight-year period one of every three families will sink for at least a year below the poverty line—often with lasting, disastrous consequences. Likewise, labor's interest in greater income equality, in steady and secure employment, in consultation and cooperation rather than cutthroat competition can all be related not only to a more productive America but to one where "productivity" would actually be reflected in better living and not merely in better statistics.

At the end of the last century, organizations of working people were forced, by law and by private economic power, to the margins of American life. It was a hard struggle, first to win legitimacy, then to achieve something approaching equal bargaining status with government and business. Recently, that status has been reduced to the role of a junior partner. By the beginning of the next century, labor could be further reduced to a kind of vestigial, consultative organ in the social body. *Or* it could take the lead in creating a society of expanded democracy and responsible citizenship. The next decade may make the difference.

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"THE MONASTERY"

"Those who believe that they believe in God," observed Unamuno, "but without passion in their hearts, without anguish in mind, without uncertainty, without doubt, without an element of despair even in their consolation, believe only in the God idea, not God Himself." So much for the surprise, perhaps morose delectation for some, in seeing Trappist Brother Albert confess, on ABC-TV's August 20 showing of "The Monastery," that he sometimes wondered if God exists. So monks are made of the same haunted stuff as we are! Some of us did not doubt that. In fact, given the standstill solitude they expose themselves to, we would contend they're likely to suffer more acutely than we worldings the psychic dislocations of the culture and the times. For we have speed and sensory overload blocking us from the worst of it — and from ourselves. The question of who's more insulated from reality, them or us, is really an open one.

So also, while we're at it, is the question of who's doing the more "useful" work. William James was the prototype American in putting monks and nuns on the pragmatic spot, as if the question did not run the other way as well.

The show was too talky, too focused on "interesting" personalities, and the puzzlement over celibacy took up a disproportionate amount of space. (Interestingly enough, of course, the monks interviewed offered no profound rationale for their sexual continence; this well-known crack in modern Catholic apologetics showed up plainly.)

Congratulations, though, are in order to ABC for being generous with prime time for producer Helen Whitney's fine effort to eff the ineffable. For entirely too long, oriental gurus, cults, and the spirituality of hot tubs have monopolized the networks' "religious" programing. It was past time that one of them chose to explore an esoteric form of life closer to home, one that in this case elicits increasing interest from mainline Protestants and Jews traditionally hostile to it, and one that has remained a secret for all too many Catholics. The choice was apt. The contemporary religious search is obviously not for dogma. Plenty of that about. Nor, arguably, is it simply for superior theologies. Plenty of that too. The quest is for authentic, earth-moving experience, some reason to have a theology at all. And within Catholicism at least, monks and contemplative nuns are, as it were, delegated authorities in first-hand religious experience. Were more of their art of inner cultivation available at the ordinary parish level, one may guess, U.S. Catholicism wouldn't be spinning its wheels as much as it so visibly is.

Helen Whitney's camera eye caught some of the paradox in this deliberately estranged form of life: the stifling taste of the secular world's ashes that had moved many of the monks, the perceived curse upon our houses — and yet, equally fierce in some, that cheerfulness and love of the earth. The No and the Yes. In the literary world, similar no's issue from Walker Percy's parody and satire of modern life; or more softly, from John Cheever's ironic pen. Simultaneously, though, Ms. Whitney caught in the monks' laughter at each other, in their common toil with plow, sheep, and pigs, weaving and assembly line jam jars, what one also finds breaking out in Percy and Cheever — a lyricism about earthy life that with monks congruently bursts forth in psalmody and eucharistic liturgy. However much the point was lost in the script — and it was — the great ritual symbols and action say what, to the contemplative's penetrating eye, is actually going on in the most common, physical doings of ordinary life. A Flannery O'Connor, for instance, after gearing up for a morning's writing by praying much the same Divine Office chanted by these Cistercians, could catch God's glory in even the most grotesque circumstance. Writ small and manageable for concentration, then, the monk's world is nothing more or less than our very own secular world — seen in another, splendid light.

Of several minds: *John Garvey*

IMPOSING MERCY

ABORTION, THE CHURCH, & THE UNWANTED

"ABORTION ITSELF WAS condoned as late as the nineteenth century by the Catholic church, using a time clock of the "ensoulment' of the fetus." Linda Bird Francke makes this statement in her letter to *Commonweal* [see page 482]; she said much the same thing in her book, and so have a number of other supporters of abortion.

I have, in fact, more basic disagreements with Ms. Francke, but it is important first to address what is a serious error of fact. The notion that until the nineteenth century the Catholic church condoned abortion is simply false. There was a distinction (based on bad biology) made between the time of conception and the time of "quickening" or "ensoulment," at which time some theologians believed that the fetus received a human soul. But this distinction was not interpreted as a permission to abort up until the time of ensoulment; such an interpretation was explicitly ruled out, and the distinction between the time before and after ensoulment was dismissed by many theologians as beside the point, since what began at conception was in any case in the process of becoming human, and was therefore sacred.

Explicit papal condemnations of abortion are late, but so is an absolutely centralized and authoritarian papacy. Abor-

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tion was explicitly condemned in the first century *Didache*, in Tertullian, in Basil, in the *Epistle of Barnabas*, and in the response of a second-century convert to Christianity who replied to the pagan charge that Christians were guilty of human sacrifice by asking, "How can we kill a man when we are those who say that all who use abortificients are homicides, and will account to God for their abortions as for the killing of men. For the fetus in the womb is not an animal." John Chrysostom says of men who encourage their mistresses to abort that they encourage them to be murderers as well as prostitutes. This opposition to abortion is the consistent Catholic teaching, and was made most pointedly by Clement of Alexandria, who associated the destruction of the child in the womb with the loss of love for humanity.*

The official teaching of the church, however, was not the point of my column. Abortion was not condoned by the Catholic church. But what if it were? It would join Catholic defenses of dueling, the castration of gifted choir boys, and slavery. Ms. Francke brought up Catholic teaching here; I didn't. As long as she is trailing red herrings, I might as well bring up Planned Parenthood's early opposition to abortion, which at one point it did not hesitate to call the killing of babies in the womb. Now it is seen — insensitively, it could be argued — as a fail-safe method of contraception. This clear departure from Planned Parenthood's earlier stance is as irrelevant to Ms. Francke's argument as Catholic teaching was to mine, but it is nevertheless an interesting example of how fast the moral terrain can shift.

Ms. Francke calls her pro-choice position a defense of "the quality of life" and says that it is "not a crime." I do not agree with her apparent definition of life's quality, but to introduce the issue of crime is to ignore the fact that crime is a legal and not a moral problem. I pointed out in my column the way law has of confusing the issue. Prostitution and the most vile forms of pornography should, it can be argued, be legal, if only because the social costs of making them illegal would be too high. Something can be legal, and wrong.

The point I set out to make was that this argument is between those who believe that life's value is a given and absolute thing, and those who believe that the value of life is something we confer on one another; it is an argument between those who believe that meaning is built into the universe, and those who believe that the only meaning is that which we impose. Ms. Francke's letter demonstrates that better than my column did. "How can there be more — or less — mystery in a woman conceiving a child than in a cow conceiving a calf?" That is an argument for either vegetarianism or cannibalism. At one level they are of course the same sort of thing: sperm and ovum connect, cell division begins. But people do matter more to me than cattle, and I am sure they do to Ms. Francke as well.

A society which can accept the killing of humanity at its most vulnerable stage is not compassionate. That seems safe enough to say. And of course our society is not; abortion isn't the only sign of our lack of compassion. So is the mentality which makes abortion seem desirable to women who are desperate. It is true that there is nothing new about abortion, and that infanticide used to be the common "solution" to the "problem of unwanted children." (I do not agree that abortion is more civilized than infanticide; many of the pro-choice arguments could be used to defend infanticide as well as abortion.) Abortion is not new, but the common acceptance of it as a decent option is relatively new. Abortion and infanticide were considered acceptable in ancient Rome. Infanticide was most commonly used then to get rid of female children. Jews and Christians were considered odd for their opposition to the use of abortifacients. But Rome — which saw so many of its people as property, to be used in whatever way the owner desired — is certainly not a model we want to imitate.

It is true that an unwanted child suffers. So does a wanted child, eventually; all of us suffer in some way, and all of us will die. If society or parents reject any human being who might suffer, or whose suffering might impose a burden on others, the problem is not with the victim but with the hardness of heart which the victim encounters. It is tragic that there are six thousand legally adoptable children in New York City, but even if "nobody wants them" (which may be an oversimplification), should they be killed? Would it be better if they had not been born? Old and retarded people are also not wanted, but I dread the thought that we might put into practice the idea that there is anything merciful or loving about making their lives easier by getting rid of them.

A friend of mine has cerebral palsy. She knows that if this condition could have been predicted she might have been aborted. She has suffered; it has not been easy for her to get through life. But her life has involved marriage, divorce, childbirth, motherhood, political and religious struggles, intellectual and moral growth, unhappiness, and joy. Someone with good intentions could have prevented all that. She is opposed to abortion; she does not regard her life as an unhappiness to be prevented. There are people who would have saved her from her life. It would have burdened them to witness her struggle; it might even have caused them pain. I find the triumph of her life infinitely more important than their interpretation of what her life should have been like to be worth living. I am glad that they were not able to impose their brand of mercy.

JOHN GARVEY

* The examples here come primarily from John Noonan's essay, "An Almost Absolute Value in History," in his *The Morality of Abortion* (Harvard, 1970) One does not have to agree with all of Noonan's conclusions to find his history impressive, certainly more impressive than the thinking which finds in the ambiguity surrounding life's beginning a permission to take life.

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Of several minds: *Thomas Powers*

THE MORAL FALLACY

NUCLEAR WAR MAKES OUR DIFFERENCES PALE

Be England what she will,
With all her faults she is my country still
"The Farewell"
Charles Churchill (1731-1764)

THE OTHER DAY — it was a drizzly Saturday morning — I drove up to Montpelier, Vermont, with a friend, Virgil B., to join a group of several hundred marchers completing a three-day walk from one small Vermont town, Washington, to another, Moscow. The marchers' goal is an American-Soviet nuclear weapons freeze. Since both countries are engaged in a rapid strategic arms buildup, the proposal of a freeze, seemingly a cautious one, is actually quite radical. It is the heart of a common program adopted by a wide range of peace groups who met in Washington last fall.

Virgil and I arrived just as the marchers were setting out on the penultimate leg of their walk to Waterbury, a distance of 3.2 miles. Another friend, Alan R., had been on the march with two of his sons, age seven and nine, since the beginning. As we walked along in the drizzle under umbrellas, herded well to the side of the road by marshals from the American Friends Service Committee, Alan told us his adventures of the previous two days. Several things had struck him. Whenever the group came to a likely body of water, for example, a group of young women immediately stripped and went swimming naked without apparent embarassment. A tall, lean, good-looking man of forty or so asked him — not once, but several times — if he thought he could spot the government agents who were taking pictures and writing down names? Since this fellow admitted to a background in security work, Alan began to wonder if *he* was the agent in question.

Alan also said he now understood why protesters all looked like unkempt hippies. After a day or two living in the open you tended to be festooned with gear — canteen over a shoulder, things stuck in your belt, a headband to keep the sweat out of your eyes, odd buttons pinned here and there, walking stick, etc., etc. But the thing which struck him most was the sharp division between the veterans who started out on the first day and the groups which joined later. The earlier groups tended toward a faint disapproval of the later, as if they didn't quite grasp what it was all about, or exhibit the proper demeanor, or share the same degree of commitment. In time, as still tardier arrivals appeared on the scene, the distinctions faded away.

In Waterbury, about noon, the marchers all filed into a local church where they were to be addressed by a Russian arms control expert, Yuri Kapralov, who had been sent by the Soviet embassy in Washington. Originally he had been scheduled to speak in Moscow at the end of the walk, but at the last moment the State Department declared Moscow off-limits for Russians. The marchers were all damp from the drizzle and the church was crowded, hot, and steamy. Kapralov was a youngish man with black horn-rimmed glasses and a good command of English despite a pronounced accent. He clearly knew the language and issues of strategic arms debate in Washington but his talk skirted most of the details and centered on Russia's desire for arms agreements, its equanimity with the idea of a freeze, and its vivid memory of the horrors of World War II. After his talk he answered questions from the audience. Most of the questions were friendly, although a few offered Kapralov an opportunity to defend or justify the total absence of independent peace groups in Russia — an opportunity he, for the most part gracefully, declined.

Before it was over Virgil was visibly squirming in his seat. I asked him what he thought. "Slick propaganda," he said. "He just turned the audience around his finger. It made me sick." Questions had been piling up in his mind: What about Sakharov? What about Afghanistan? What would happen to Poland if we had no theater nuclear forces in Europe? Kapralov's every friendly word — skirting all the difficult questions — just made Virgil madder and madder. He had been going through a period of intense melancholy, common to people when they first begin to think hard about nuclear weapons. He had been seeing things with new eyes — the cities which might be destroyed, the green earth which might be poisoned, his own children who were hostage in a global confrontation. But when Kapralov stuck to those very things, the vagaries of peace, it made Virgil mad.

I ONCE SPENT THE better part of a year trying to figure out why the Arabs and the Israelis could not make peace. My technique was to read history, paying close attention to the details. I started with Theodor Herzl and the beginnings of the Zionist movement, when Palestine was often described as a kind of unpeopled wasteland. I spent a lot of time on the 1920s and '30s, when Britain began to think better of the Balfour Declaration. The infamous White Paper, limiting Jewish immigration at the very moment of Hitler's rise, and the intrigues of the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, seemed especially significant. I followed the postwar diplomatic maneuvering which led to British withdrawal and UN support for an independent Israel. I did not neglect the massacre at Deir Yassin or the bombing of the King David Hotel. And so on and so forth through all the wars, the rise of the Palestinians, the UN resolutions and the various peace initiatives, down to the present day. Finally I went to the Middle East and spent six weeks talking to people — not famous people but not quite ordinary people either, passionate partisans for both sides.

From this exercise I learned one useful thing — nobody is right. There is no single thread of justice. You can't add up

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all the violence, the honest and dishonest acts, the atrocities and heroic sacrifices. The history of the place is not a history of wrongs and rights — something you can judge — but a history of two entities in collision. Each defends itself. One question overrides all the others: who gets to call Palestine his own?

Q.: *What about Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia?*

A.: What about Guatemala, Cuba, Chile, Indonesia, Iran?

Q.: *What about Afghanistan?*

A.: What about Vietnam?

Q.: *What about Hafizullah Amin?*

A.: What about Ngo Dinh Diem?

Q.: *What about Masaryk?*

A.: What about Lumumba?

Q.: *What about Sakharov?*

A.: What about Martin Luther King?

Q.: *What about the kulaks?*

A.: What about the Negroes?

Q.: *What about the purges, Gulag, Lubyanka, Siberia?*

A.: What about Dresden, Hamburg, Hiroshima, free-fire zones, Agent Orange?

Q.: *What about the SS-20?*

A.: What about Pershing, GLCMs, SLCMs, ALCMs?

Q.: *What about fifty thousand tanks in Eastern Europe?*

A.: What about the neutron bomb?

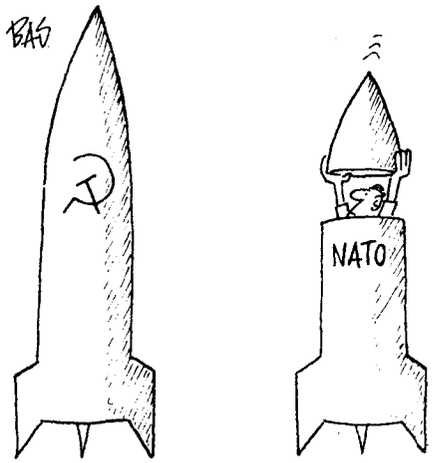
Q.: *What about world revolution and the triumph of Communism?*

A.: What about "the last best hope of mankind"?

Q.: *What about Khrushchev, "We will bury you"?*

A.: What about Sen. Richard Russell, "If we have to start over again from Adam, I want to be sure he's an American"?

THIS SORT OF THING will get us nowhere. When it is used to explain the Cold War, it is fundamentally dishonest. Political acts have moral aspects, and it is a sign of civilization to try to keep them in mind, but justice is not the motor of history. We do not oppose and arm against the Russians because they have been found guilty in a formal proceeding conducted with strict respect for the rules of evidence. Enmity between



nations is more mysterious than that. At the start of *The Peloponnesian War* Thucydides cites but rejects the popular explanation of the war, based on various crimes of Sparta and Athens. Some of these were crimes all right — especially the Athenian massacre of a recalcitrant ally — but Thucydides claims the real cause was Sparta's fear of growing Athenian power.

It is the same with Russia and America. Throughout World War II in Washington and London there was a kind of muttering undertone of hostility toward Russia, a State Department-Whitehall alarm, deep in the bowels of bureaucracy, that Stalin was no less a threat than Hitler. General Leslie Groves, the director of the Manhattan Project, once told a colleague that within weeks of taking on the job he was convinced that "Russia was our enemy and . . . the project was conducted on that basis." Allen Dulles, chief of the OSS office in Berne, Switzerland, told a friend he began to switch the focus of his concern from Germany to Russia after the battle of Stalingrad, when it became clear Hitler could no longer win. General George Patton wanted to drive right on to Russia in 1945. This was not the inevitable friction of allies but something much deeper, a Western fear of Russian size, appetite, and "backwardness" — the city-man's fear of a sullen, barbarian horde — which goes back deep into the nineteenth century. It is not anger at what Russia has done which explains the Cold War from the Western point of view, but fear of what Russia is.

The Soviet Union has indeed done many terrible things. So have we all. Someone once said that history is the record of crimes. But war is not an instrument of judgment. It may settle things from time to time but it does not discriminate. Bigger battalions are simply bigger battalions.

ONE AFTERNOON IN 1975, in a farmhouse not far from the Sea of Galilee, I spent a couple of hours listening to a roomful of Israelis try to explain their country's failure to make peace with the Arabs. In large part they blamed themselves — they had been too confident after the Six Day War in 1967, they couldn't make up their minds about the West Bank, they were too unbending with the Palestinians, they relied too heavily on arms. It was an extraordinary performance in the act of self-criticism, the more striking after two weeks in Beirut listening to Palestinians. The Palestinians all seemed to have read the same book. They disagreed with each other about the proper form of socialism to be established in Palestine after the liberation, but on every other point they were unanimous. It appeared they were totally free of all blame in the conflict, going right back to the 1880s. It was a Jewish invasion from the beginning, the land must be returned to its rightful owners, and there was no more to be said about it.

This was purely a difference in character. It said nothing about who was on which side. The Israelis I listened to had all been in the army, had all fought in one or two wars, had all been wounded. All continued to serve 60-90 days a year on active duty, and all were ready to fight again. They judged their country, but would not abandon her. I thought about this on the drive back from Waterbury, Vermont, after listening to Yuri Kapralov skate over the differences between us and them. It had been a practiced performance all right, but what else was he to do? They're on their side, and we're on ours. Some of the things they have done stick in the craw, but what of it? Doubtless they feel the same way, and what of that? Both pale beside what we have prepared to do to each other, in the name of defense. What we have here, in short, is a case of apples and oranges.

THOMAS POWERS

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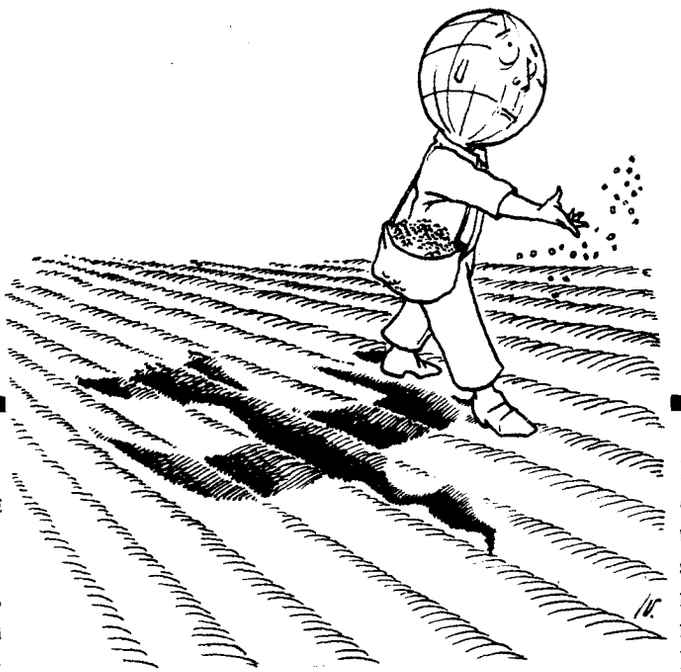
How to combat world famine

Whatever happened to the Green Revolution— and what we should do about it now



SUDHIR SEN

LAST JANUARY THE much-esteemed *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* moved the hands of its "doomsday clock" from seven to four minutes before the midnight of extinction. The step was prompted by the fact that improved missile accuracy and mobility have unleashed a new arms race, threatening the acceptance of counterforce first-strike policies by both sides. It was a grim reminder of the fateful times we live in.

Another clock with awesome implications has been ticking for quite some time — that of global famine. No trained hands have fashioned it to match the *Bulletin*'s handiwork and to adjust its movements. However, thirteen years ago William and Paul Paddock did make an attempt, albeit a clumsy one, in their hair-raising *Famine 1975: America's Decision, Who Will Survive*. Around the same time we saw the emergence of a group of scientists preaching the gospel of triage. They used their considerable talent not to find out how hungry nations could be saved from the jaws of famine, but to determine the precise order in which they should be sacrificed.

But the green revolution had just burst on the horizon. It mocked the cynicism of the doomsayers. And most of us felt confident that with this rapidly unfolding revolution we would be able to beat back the looming famine.

SUDHIR SEN, *for many years a director of the United Nations Development Program, has written numerous studies including* A Richer Harvest — New Horizons for Developing Nations *and* Reaping the Green Revolution—Food and Jobs for All *(Orbis, N.Y. and Tata McGraw-Hill, New Delhi). This article will be published by Orbis next spring in* Famine, *edited by Kevin M. Cahill, M.D.*

Those hopes have remained largely unfulfilled. All we have done so far is to buy some extra time — a decade or two. The specter of famine has been far from banished. Right now, famine is raging in all its fury in Northeast Africa, where tribal warfare and superpower rivalry superimposed on a drought-stricken primitive agriculture have created a ghastly tragedy. For the first time we have seen the ugly face of triage in the Horn of Africa where too many people are too close to death and there is not enough food to go round.

Nor should we forget the eight hundred million people, or one-fifth of humanity, whom Robert McNamara calls the "absolute poor." Their absolute number is still rising as population leaps ahead. They live in famine and near-famine conditions, spread over the third world, especially in Central Africa and South Asia. The reality of famine is already there even though we fight shy of the word as a matter of semantics or as a comfort to our consciences.

After surveying the precarious world food situation, FAO Director-General Edouard Saouma recently sounded the alarm. "We are really in a state of general alert," he declared. Here are some of the facts he cited: The rate of agricultural production has not kept pace with population growth in many countries of the third world. In fifteen countries, production in 1979 was even lower than in 1970; twenty-nine developing countries are now suffering from acute food shortage; the situation is particularly serious in Africa, where people have ten percent less food than they had ten years ago and where starvation is imminent.

Meanwhile, world grain production, according to FAO's estimate, may drop by six million tons in 1980-81. The results

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are clear: declining stocks, rising prices, greater dependence of the food-deficit countries on external sources. The import requirements of developing countries this year, according to Dr. Saouma, may reach ninety-four million tons of grain. Where will they get this huge tonnage from? And how will they pay for it? Prices are already exorbitant, and are still trending upwards. Wheat prices, for example, have gone up thirty percent since the beginning of the current season. And developing nations are already staggering under an external debt burden of over $360 billion.

For the third year in succession world grain stocks are expected to decline — by the end of the 1980-81 season they will probably total just fourteen percent of world consumption, which is well below the minimum deemed necessary for world food security. This means we continue to be vulnerable to the vagaries of climate. And unless the 1981 harvests are good, the world may experience another crisis similar to that of 1973, or worse.

SUCH, THEN, ARE the dismal prospects that face us today. And so the question arises: What happened to the green revolution on which we had built our hopes not so very long ago? Has its promise faded — for good? And will the apocalyptic vision of the Paddock brothers and the triagists come true, after all, with a slight delay — this year, or in the Orwellian year of 1984, or a bit later?

For a correct diagnosis of today's problems, we have to ask ourselves a straight question: How did we manage to arrive at today's dreadful mess, with population constantly threatening to outrun food production and setting the stage for hunger and starvation on a mind-boggling scale? What, in short, has actually gone wrong? Economists, sociologists, scientists, politicians, and others are of course ready with their own answers; and quite a few would still hark back to the past and flog a dead horse called colonialism. Almost all of them are quite off the mark. The world food crisis is essentially a post-colonial and post-World War II phenomenon. It stems not from cold-blooded exploitation of people, but from a lopsided application of science; not from the folly of individual nations, but from the collective folly of mankind.

Here is a revealing episode that occurred in New York just over forty years ago, in February 1941, although it is buried deep in the archives beyond the reach even of the most penetrating minds. The Rockefeller Foundation was about to develop a program of assistance for Mexico. And so Raymond B. Fosdick, then president of the Foundation, approached U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Henry A. Wallace for his advice. The advice he gave was both forthright and apropos. It would be a "a fine thing" if the Foundation went to Mexico, he told Mr. Fosdick, but warned that "they should not do much in the way of health work" because he thought "it would be a crime to make another Puerto Rico out of Mexico with population crowding on the means of subsistence."

He also told Mr. Fosdick: "The all-important thing is to expand the means of subsistence. The corn of Mexico is yielding only ten bushels to the acre. The principal source of food among the Mexican masses is corn. Above everything there, a job should be done on increasing the yield of corn. I know positively that a very great improvement could be made."

Soon afterward the Foundation sent three leading American scientists to Mexico to carry out a quick reconnaissance and feasibility study. And this led, a few months later, to the establishment of a grain genetics program under Dr. J. George Harrar, later president of the Foundation. So began an effort that, by the 1960s, culminated in the green revolution, though for some fortuitous reasons, the pride of place went to wheat rather than corn.

The point at issue is this: Since the Second World War the developing countries have received, in one form or another, a great deal of assistance in health and tropical medicine, while tropical agriculture has suffered from chronic and cruel neglect. WHO has set up a spectacular record of achievements, virtually stamping out malaria (even though it threatens to reemerge in some pockets) and other arch-killers; it has far outshone FAO in performance. Bilateral programs, too, have made large contributions to that end. And the transnational corporations have spread the biomedical revolution far and wide with a dazzling array of wonder drugs and medical technologies. The result has been a rapid extension of life expectancies, leading to an explosive growth of population in the developing world at a time when its food production remained stagnant or lagged way behind.

Thus, we have done precisely what Henry Wallace had warned the aid-givers not to do. As a result, population has relentlessly crowded on the means of subsistence, threatening to deliver two billion people or more to perpetual hunger and starvation.

The world food crisis, at bottom, is a man-made phenomenon. It is the direct outcome of topsy-turvy priorities; of the health-before-food, or health-without-food, approach; of boosting longevity without paying heed to the adequacy of life-sustaining nutrition; of saving the masses of people from mass killers only to deliver them to mass starvation. No wonder that "development has not developed"; in fact, it was derailed right at the start. Having mindlessly unleashed the demographic genie we are now frantically looking for some magic means to bring it under control.

WHEN THE food problem began to attract more attention in the early fifties, we immediately ran into formidable snags. First, there was a widespread misperception even among experts. They believed that a very rapid improvement in food production could be brought about in the poor nations, and that all they needed to do so were men, money, and machinery. They were the so-called "know-how, show-how enthusiasts" who believed hybrid corn could be transplanted overnight, say, from Kansas State to the Ganges Valley, just as a steel mill or a textile plant could be hauled across the oceans and established in a developing country. What they overlooked was a simple fact, namely that agriculture deals with plants and animals which are living things and therefore not

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easily transferable across climatic barriers; that they call for specific research in a given environment for their improvement, propagation, and protection. The experts needed some rude shocks before they realized this simple truth. By contrast, medical experts have all along regarded it as an axiom that an effective system of tropical medicine for controlling tropical diseases can be developed only on the basis of intensive research and investigations on the spot.

Today we know better. Improved varieties of crops and breeds of animals constitute the heart of agricultural development. Hence the emphasis now being laid on crop and animal research in the tropics to fill a critical void inherited from the past.

The other snag was the huge food surplus in the United States. What could be more reasonable for Americans, as they looked at their mounting stockpile of food at home and pervasive hunger abroad, than to urge a marriage of the two? It looked like an ideal solution, good for the pocket and good for the soul. So began a phase of humanitarian dumping of highly subsidized food in the developing countries. The first voice of reason to challenge this policy came from Theodore Schultz who was awarded the Nobel Prize two years ago. The U.S. policy, he argued, was unsound for its own economy and, what is more, damaging to weak economies of the poor nations. These nations must develop their own agriculture and produce their own food to the maximum possible extent, he insisted. That was the only way they could ever expect to work their way out of hunger and poverty and to raise their own living standards to a tolerable level.

What should have been the number-one item on any rational agenda for third-world development was quietly erased from it.

Here again, things have changed quite radically. America's food surplus is much less of a problem than it was in the fifties and sixties. American prices have rocketed beyond the reach of poor nations; the surplus is being systematically used to maximize export earnings to narrow the balance of trade deficits; there has even been an atrocious suggestion to use food "as a weapon"; there is stony reluctance to spare enough tonnage of food to bring relief even to the famine-stricken millions of Northeast and Central Africa.

And so developing countries are now compelled — mercifully — to fend for themselves. Can they do so, how, and how rapidly? These are the questions that should be at the top of the agenda of any discussions relating to the development of the poor nations.

Despite the pervasive gloom and the intimidating dimensions of the world food problem, there is no reason for despair, at least not yet. Though the hour is late, the problem can still be tackled effectively. This confidence is warranted because of two principal reasons:

- The developing countries possess rich and still unused or underused physical resources — large expanses of arable lands; abundant supplies of water despite arid tracts; a warm climate with profuse sunshine ideal for multiple cropping and even year-round cropping where enough water is available; a vast pool of manpower which, though a burden, can be turned into an asset.
- Advanced technologies, and especially high-yielding plant varieties, are now available to bring about a rapid increase in per-acre productivity.

Our best hope today lies in capitalizing on the potential of the high-yielding varieties that have emerged, or are emerging, from the series of international centers established in the last twenty years for crop research in tropical agriculture. Since there has been a good deal of misconception — and much groaning and grumbling — about the green revolution, let me try to set it in perspective.

WHEN THE DWARF wheat, Norman Borlaug's handiwork, burst upon the scene and with its spectacular yields began to cut a wide swath across three continents, some ingenious mind promptly labelled it "green revolution." The nomenclature had a distinct Madison Avenue ring; besides the obvious botanical reference, "green" in this context also meant "not red," and the slogan's transparent purpose was to unlock a more liberal supply of aid dollars from a tightfisted Congress. Whatever the motive, it must be admitted in retrospect that the phrase was unfortunate and has been the source of much confusion. The initial publicity it received was overdone; the expectations it aroused ran too high; and so a reaction was bound to follow. As the world stumbled anew into a food crisis in 1973 and continued to coast along the brink of fresh ones, many began to question the very existence of such a revolution. In their sweeping negativism they overlook two incontestable facts. First, in a biological sense, there has indeed been a revolution. Genetically improved varieties of wheat, rice, corn, sorghum, pulses, potato, cassava, and other major crops grown in the tropics, including some vegetables, are already there. These "on-the-shelf" and "near-shelf" technologies are capable of raising the average acre-yield several-fold.

And second, were it not for these new varieties the world food situation today would be incomparably worse, and "famine 1975" might well have become a reality. To cite just one example, food-grain production in India rose from 82 million (metric) tons in 1969-71 to 132 million tons in 1978-79. During the same period production of wheat more than trebled — from 11 million to 34 million tons; the production of rice, too, rose from 35 million to 54 million tons. These increases were possible mainly because of the high-yielding varieties. But for them India would have found it impossible to feed her soaring population even on the present low level of

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nutrition. For in the last two decades her population grew from 439 million to 683 million, or by fifty-six per cent.

Some scientists prefer to speak of a "seed-fertilizer revolution," rather than of a "green revolution," a term they find colorful but vague. This has some merit inasmuch as it focuses attention on the two primary ingredients that constitute the heart of the green revolution. But it suffers from the fact that its focus is much too narrow, and therefore it misses the exciting vistas that the high-yielding varieties have opened up for the developing countries.

In fact, what we are experiencing is something far more momentous: the age of science has suddenly burst on the static scene of tropical agriculture. We stand on the threshold of an all-encompassing *revolution in tropical agriculture*. This is the real meaning of the green revolution. Our foremost concern at this stage must be to spread it systematically and as rapidly as we can.

It follows that the frequent reports we hear about its demise are highly exaggerated. More to the point are Bob Dylan's words which, written in a different context, echo through all this pessimism: "It looks like it's a-dyin' an' its hardly been born."

Yet, in fairness, we must admit that the critics of the green revolution have some valid points. It has, without doubt, created turmoil in the countryside; led to waves of evictions of tenants and sharecroppers; and in general made the rich richer and the poor poorer in rural areas. Its progress, too, has slowed down, and in many areas it has already hit a plateau. All this is certainly true, and yet the underlying reasons are too often distorted or misunderstood. The fault lies not with the green revolution per se, but with the failure to accommodate it properly and to cash in on its unique potential for the benefit of the masses of people.

Speaking to a symposium on the conquest of hunger held in 1967, Dr. Norman Borlaug argued: National production programs should be organized not for a "slow, steady increase of yields," but for a "revolution in production." When yields are changed from 500 to 5,000 kilos per hectare, "a cataclysmic reaction occurs across the whole spectrum of human activity."

Echoing the same sentiment, others have argued that there was not much a country like India could do by way of boosting production until the arrival of the high-yielding varieties. This is an ex-post-facto whitewash of some grievous defaults of the previous years. A great deal could, and should, have been done even in the days of old, or "traditional," agriculture. This is particularly true of two crucial areas: land reform and road building.

India, for example, had for decades declared a land-to-the-tiller program as a foremost national goal, but after independence it was virtually bypassed in almost all areas. The country was decolonized, but it was not defeudalized. Absentee landlordism is still rampant, and the farmlands are crowded with tenants-at-will and sharecroppers-at-will. They lack the incentive to work intensively since they cannot retain enough of what they earn with the sweat of their brow. And they cannot obtain credit — to raise crops or to improve their land — since they have no asset they could mortgage as collateral. The landlord, as a rule, flourishes by exploiting not land, but people. And productivity remains abysmally low.

The green revolution, in its economic impact and wealth-creating potential, resembles the industrial revolution that started in Britain just over two hundred years ago and gradually swept over Western Europe. But even more than the industrial revolution, which arrived *after* the liquidation of much of the feudal system and long after the emancipation of the serfs, the green revolution exploded overnight right in the heart of a feudal milieu — and was accompanied by a biomedical revolution and a population explosion. Inevitably it created enormous convulsions. The landlords saw unique opportunities — both in mechanized farming with the new seeds and in soaring land prices — to multiply their wealth rapidly. There followed large-scale repossessions of land and evictions of tenants. The land-to-the-tiller plan was turned upside down. Is it surprising that in such a situation the rich should get richer, and the poor poorer?

How different would have been post-war history if the land reform movement, after setting shining examples of success in Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan, had not been abruptly shelved in the late forties! Though not commonly recognized as such, land reform became the first casualty of the Cold War. What emerged next was a de facto alliance between the feudal interests of the developing countries and the so-called aid programs. Even the United Nations family toed the passive line and soft-pedaled the land reform issue. The biological engineers who had ushered in the dwarfs remained surprisingly reticent about it. What should have been the number-one item on any rational agenda for third-world development was quietly erased from it. We are still paying a staggering penalty for this egregious default.

THE GREEN REVOLUTION, as we all know, is in essence a gene revolution. Its centerpiece is a new plant-type — a dwarf with stiff straw, erect leaves, a strong root system, able to absorb a lot of sunshine and large doses of fertilizers. When properly cultured, it gives, say, five to six times more yield. And it grows well even when the days are short or the sky is cloudy, and so it matures quickly — in three to four months. Consequently, where water supply is assured, we can grow three to four crops a year with these varieties.

The *traditional plant* has been restructured and turned ingeniously into a dwarf to multiply its grain-yielding capability. Our next task, as I emphasized in *A Richer Harvest* (Orbis, 1974), was to restructure the *traditional environment* so that the dwarf could readily yield up its bounties. More specifically I argued: "The tall varieties of wheat and rice had to be dwarfed to produce the seeds of the green revolution. The critical dwarfing genes came from Japan and Taiwan. To make the most of the new seeds, big farms, too, will need to be dwarfed. For the right model one can best turn, once again, to the same twin sources."

But what about the size of holdings? Those who worry that

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they might be too small will do well to look at the productivity of farms in Japan, Taiwan, and South Korea: also the productivity of the private plots in Soviet Russia and mainland China. Indeed, if small is ever beautiful, it should above all be a small, family-owned tropical farm, intensively cultivated for mixed crops and aimed at maximum production, income, and jobs per acre.

Developing nations can no longer fool themselves with the thought that America can, or will, feed their teeming millions.

THE RESTRUCTURING OF THE environment has yet another major dimension which, though axiomatic, is only too often overlooked by experts as well as laymen. Let me use an exaggerated analogy to highlight the point. Suppose the United States had had no "Drang nach Westen," no drive to new frontiers under the banner of Manifest Destiny or "winning the West." Suppose it had remained confined to the Eastern seaboard states which just over two hundred years ago joined hands to establish the Federation. How different would have been its history! And what would have happened to its farmlands and its crop production which has become a pillar of its economy and of the world food system?

To a large extent this is the kind of anomaly most developing countries are suffering from today. The colonial masters, for obvious reasons, dropped ports at convenient spots which in due course dotted the coastlines of the three continents they came to dominate. The ports grew into towns, then into cities; more recently, quite a few of them have expanded into sprawling megalopolises; and inevitably they have become the centers of development and the sources of a large infusion of Western culture. The sea lanes were the umbilical cords that tied these ports to the metropolitan powers. That pattern has remained largely intact even after decolonization. Or, one might say without much violence to facts, the rural areas have become the colonies of *native* rulers. The vast hinterlands have remained isolated. Quite often goods cannot move even short distances of twenty or thirty miles within a country, even though they can travel thousands of miles across the seas.

The seeds of the green revolution cannot flourish in rural communities languishing in such total isolation. Even if the seeds somehow manage to reach them, who will cultivate them? Even primitive farmers are not foolish enough to produce surpluses they know they will not be able to move to a market.

Thus the feudal chains have been reinforced by spatial chains; and the two together spell subsistence farming. This is overwhelmingly the case in most developing countries even today. Their agriculture, it follows, must be liberated from this dual bondage if the green revolution is to spread far and wide, instead of being confined to some isolated pockets.

An eminent British agricultural economist, Professor A.W. Ashby, was fond of saying, "If I could do only one thing in a region to spur agricultural development, I would build roads. If to this I could add a second, I would build more roads. And if to these I could add a third, I would build still more roads." This is what we should have done long before the arrival of the high-yielding varieties. Can we afford not to do so even now?

Roads must of course be built in a rational sequence—to keep down costs, to minimize the time lag, and to maximize the pay-off. Obviously, the right places to begin are the densely populated rural areas. In such areas there are, almost always, primitive — or notional — market places where farmers bring their meager surpluses after laboriously — and wastefully — negotiating dirt roads and no-roads. All-weather village-to-market roads, with a few modern facilities of a market town provided in these central places, will make an immediate economic impact. They will spur farm production and spawn a host of local industries and services. Adam Smith will then come alive stimulating exchange of goods and services on an increasing scale.

The objective should of course be to extend these feeder roads in stages, linking the small market towns to larger townships, to cities, and to the big metropolitan areas, creating a rural-urban continuum which is the backbone of a modern economy.

Land-to-the-tiller, roads with neighborhood market-towns — these are the two prime movers of agriculture, also the most powerful levers of progress, which developing countries most urgently need today. With them even primitive farming can be catapulted into the scientific age surprisingly fast.

A MODERN SCIENCE-INTENSIVE agriculture will of course need a good many other things to ensure rapid progress: seeds, fertilizers, plant protection; consolidation of holdings; soil conservation; irrigation and water management; research, extension, education; incentive price; credit supply; transportation, warehousing; farmer cooperatives; mixed farming to boost incomes; an effective administrative apparatus; sound, agri-oriented government policies. The list is long and, at first glance, daunting. However, once the two basic prerequisites mentioned above are satisfied, the rest will be greatly facilitated. Indeed, many of the things will tend to fall into place more or less automatically as a result of the internal dynamics of a revitalized rural economy.

Here are some of the time-tested consequences that will ensue. As owners, farmers will take constant care to protect the land and to conserve the soil in order to build up the asset value of their property. Unlike tenants and sharecroppers, they should have no difficulty in obtaining the credit they need to raise crops, to purchase equipment and other supplies, to improve their land. They will soon see the advantages of having all their bits and pieces of land in one compact block

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wherever physically feasible, rather than leave them scattered over a wide area as is now the case. This should produce a groundswell for consolidating holdings, erasing the crazy-quilt pattern inherited from the past, and radically changing the landscape.

Such consolidation will in itself amount to a major revolution. It is also a sine qua non for a rational system of irrigation, and therefore for intensive farming based on multiple cropping. To further boost farm incomes, this intensive farming may be mixed with cattle-breeding, poultry-raising, pond fishery, and cultivation of a wide range of vegetables and fruits. Each of these categories has large untapped potential to multiply food production and farm incomes. Pond fish culture offers, to quote FAO, "the most spectacular possibilities of rapid expansion" by increasing both the area under pond culture and yields from existing ponds. The agency made this remark in its "Indicative World Plan for Agricultural Development" unveiled in 1970. It is also indicative of the inertia that characterizes aid programs that in the intervening years so little has been done to activate this potential.

Here are some of the other things we may confidently expect, once agriculture comes to be dominated by owner-farmers. In their own interest, farmers will readily join hands to procure their supplies and to sell their produce on more advantageous terms; genuine cooperatives will mushroom. Once farmers own their land, one of the very first things they will do is to build themselves homes, however modest, largely using local materials and their own family labor. This will boost housing and building-related industries, create millions of new jobs, and, by satisfying a prime necessity at relatively low cost, raise living standards.

It is fascinating to reflect on the larger ramifications of these trends. Once the great majority of the tillers in the developing nations are turned into landowning farm families (India alone has sixty-five million or more such families), they will be fully employed on their farms; the multiplier effects of fast-rising farm productivity will spill over in all directions, creating countless opportunities for new jobs, both on the farm and off the farm. This will, at last, break the back of the massive problem of rural unemployment, put to productive work the billions of idle man-hours that now run to waste, and multiply the rate of GNP growth.

ALL THESE TRENDS should more or less build upon themselves. However, progress will be greatly accelerated if concerted action is taken on four other fronts, national and international.

First, all developing countries sorely need comprehensive *rural works programs* — to build roads, market-towns, warehouses; to construct small-to-medium irrigation projects; to conserve soil and water through gulley-plugging, contour-bunding, and other measures; to reforest wastelands; to reclaim marshy or waterlogged areas; and to carry out other agri-related activities. Together, they form an integral part of restructuring the environment mentioned earlier. They will provide jobs for the dizzily rising idle workforce in rural areas. And they will also create strong underpinnings — the sinews — of a modern agriculture.

But how will they be funded? This brings me to the second point, namely, *finance*, the ever-present issue and, in the eyes of many, the biggest stumbling block. Yet, formidable as the problem of finance looks, it is largely our own creation. We predicate development on massive external finance running into billions of dollars, and then throw up our hands in despair because aid on such a scale is not forthcoming. We have long preached the gospel of self-reliance in the developing countries only to make them ever more dependent, at least mentally, on external aid. We have talked of "operation bootstrap," but have trapped them with false hopes. It is high time to treat the billions of wasting man-hours as equivalent to billions of dollars and to cash them in aggressively.

India's national leader Mahatma Gandhi used to say, "A man is born not simply with a mouth, but also with two hands." Model-building development economists must learn to program this elementary truth into their computers if they are to be worthy of their professional salt. In every developing counry there is a vast potential for productive job opportunities. This, in essence, is the mirror image of underdevelopment. Besides, one must remember that some forty-five to fifty percent of the population in developing countries is below fifteen years of age. These fragile economies are groaning under the burden of a huge population of dependent children and teenagers. What could be more irrational — and inhuman — than to saddle them in addition with a huge burden of jobless adults? What we really need is to expand production credit boldly to finance a whole array of high-yielding, quick-maturing projects, and to mobilize the vast manpower to work on them. In fact, all activities relating to the green revolution should fully qualify for credit finance. The yield-packed miracle seeds — along with the land, water, and the profuse sunshine of the tropics — should be adequate collateral for even the most conservative bankers of the world.

My third item relates to something that came like a bolt from the blue — the *fertilizer crisis*, which is an offspring of the energy problem. The miracle seeds had been — and are being — evolved on the assumption that fertilizers will be available in abundance and at an affordable price. Then came the overnight quadrupling of the oil price at the end of 1973; and since then there has been a further trebling or quadrupling spread over the last few years. Together, they have dealt a heavy blow to the nascent green revolution just when it had started to gain momentum. A way must be found out of the present predicament. A crying need of the hour is to make an all-out effort to vastly step up fertilizer production—to feed the high-yielding varieties flowing out of the international crop research centers so that they may, in turn, feed the surging population of the third world.

Would it be possible to set up a series of fertilizer factories at suitable locations *within the developing countries* as a logical complement to the work of the international crop research centers? The ideal approach would be to establish these fertilizer plants on a *tripartite basis* — with crude oil and capital

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furnished by the OPEC members; up-to-date technologies, machinery, and managerial know-how supplied by the Western countries which will of course include Japan; and local labor and other facilities provided by the host countries. All three will stand to gain tremendously from such joint ventures, and through such action they can help conquer hunger and famine once and for all. This is the approach that needs to be energetically explored at the international level today.

Finally, though much progress has been made on the *research front*, a great deal more remains to be done. Wide crosses like those made between wheat and rye may open up new possibilities to produce more food of higher nutritive value at a low unit cost. A spectacular breakthrough, which seems tantalizingly close, would be nitrogen fixation for non-leguminous plants. If and when this comes true, it will liberate agriculture from one more bondage — its dependence on factory-produced nitrogeneous fertilizers. Research on the food front must continue with the same relentless vigor as research on the health front. For it is a kind of "Open Sesame!" that can miraculously open up shorter and quicker routes to a future of abundance.

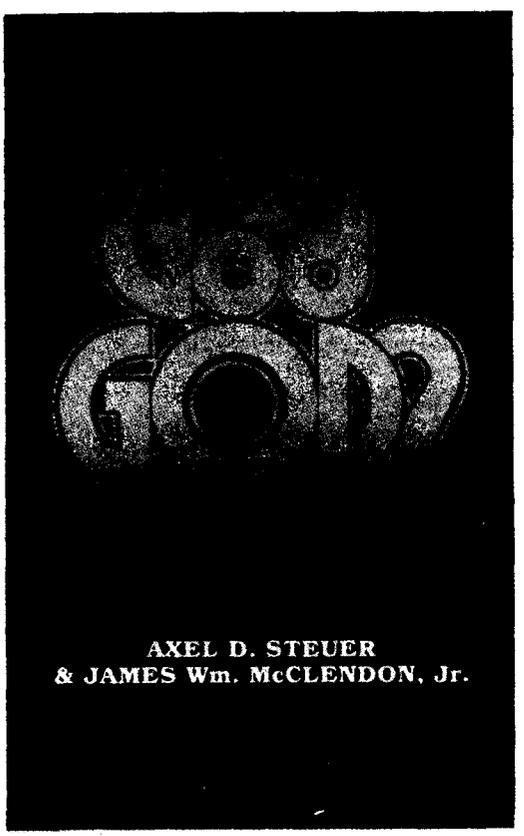
Moreover, health and food are complementary. WHO has drawn up a bold and imaginative program called *Health for All by the Year 2000*. But clearly it can succeed only if it moves in lockstep with another program, namely, *Food for All*, also to be accomplished in the last stretch of the twentieth century. What good will it do if large segments of mankind are painstakingly rescued from deadly diseases and then delivered to protein-calorie malnutrition, if not to stark hunger?

There is a great deal that international aid-givers and national planners can learn from the World Health Organization and its systematic, goal-conscious, fact-oriented approach in dealing with a major problem like malaria or tuberculosis, bilharziasis or trypanosomaisis. This is the kind of approach they must apply also in dealing with the four great problems of the third world: poverty, hunger, population, and illiteracy.

When donors and planners and national leaders get sufficiently serious about tackling the problem of world hunger, they will end their scatter-shot programing, their hit-or-miss methods without priorities; and will concentrate their efforts, above all, on the half-dozen crucial items that have been outlined above. When this happens, freedom from hunger will cease to be a dream or a mere yearning of the soul. It will be well on its way to becoming a reality.

WHAT, THEN, IS THE prognosis? Over the years I have come to consider myself, like René Dubos, a "despairing optimist." At this point, my optimism is warranted by some excellent reasons:

America's food surplus has ceased to be a problem; it has shrunken in size, its function has changed, and its price has soared too high for most developing nations. They can no



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longer fool themselves with the thought that America can, or will, feed their teeming millions.

The aid dollars — that is, dollars available for non-military aid — are dwindling fast. In Washington, the budget axe is falling mercilessly even on essential social programs amidst cries of agony. This is hastening a chastening process among third-world nations. They cannot much longer chase the will-o'-the-wisp of massive transfer of resources from the affluent countries.

The petrodollar hordes piled up by the OPEC nations have flooded the "North" for several years almost to the point of saturation. They are now slowly turning "Southward" in one form or another.

The rich nations know more than ever before that to run their industrial machine they need secure supplies of raw materials, especially a number of key minerals, from the poor nations; that they can no longer commandeer them but can obtain them only through fair deals on a give-and-take basis. Besides, caught in a zero-sum growth in world trade, they are bickering bitterly among themselves for limited markets. As a result, they are waking up to the realization that the pie of world trade can be greatly enlarged by speeding economic growth and spreading prosperity in the South.

Finally, there is a heartening signal — from, of all places, turbulent El Salvador. The middle-of-the-road moderates, in a frantic eleventh-hour move to avert the worst, pushed through a radical land-to-the-tiller program. The results are not in, of course. The program has been caught in a crossfire of suspicions and sometimes, literally, of bullets, between the right and the left. Yet it has apparently gained solid support from an army of newly-created owner-farmers. The Reagan regime, too, after its precipitate plunge, is having second and third thoughts, and it may yet veer round to the realistic conclusion that its best bet to avoid another Vietnam in El Salvador, and to bring peace and stability to this troubled land, is to lend full support to the land reform and make it an unalloyed success.

El Salvador, however, is only a curtain-raiser. The struggle that has begun there to "win the hearts and minds of the people," to use a Vietnam-era phrase, with equitable land distribution among the actual tillers as the central issue in this relentless tug of war, is destined to spread to other countries. Ironically, we are coming full circle to realize once again, after three decades of groping in the wilderness, that land-to-the-tiller programs have a most vital role to play, that this is the only road that can lead to rapid economic growth along with social justice, and therefore also to peace and stability.

Thus, driven by circumstances, developing countries have begun to move in the right direction, still slowly and clumsily, often in reverse gear out of dead ends. But they are at last in sight of the highway. It may be presumed that before long they will muster enough sense to make an about-turn, to get on to the good road, and to move confidently towards the long-cherished goal with all deliberate speed.

Let us hope this will happen soon. There isn't much time left to waste. The clock of global famine is still ticking remorselessly.

WHAT THE P2 AFFAIR REVEALS ABOUT ITALY

Cracks in the Masonry

ERIC R. TERZUOLO

"MEN OF INTELLIGENCE, culture, wisdom, and, above all generosity, with a moral and intellectual drive to work solely for the good of mankind. . . ." Thus did Licio Gelli, Venerable Master of the P2 Lodge, describe his brother Masons in an October 1980 interview. In the last two months, however, it has become clear that the members of the Lodge sought only (and very effectively) their own personal advantage, constructing in the process Italy's most intricate political and economic conspiracy since the end of the Second World War.

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The P2 seems to have had its fingers in every scandal of substance. The story is enough to make even the most solemn journalist's heart race. The settings are diverse and often exotic: Italy, the United States, Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, even Rumania and Iran. The cast of characters includes politicians ranging from neofascists through socialists, generals, admirals, colonels, captains, virtually all the top people in the Italian intelligence community, the Knights of Malta, physicians, high prelates, administrators, financiers. T; P2's dealing involved arms, Libyan and Saudi Arabian oil, Argentine beef, Canadian uranium, the Rizzoli publishing empire, vast amounts of cash, positions in government and business. The news makes fascinating, though often confusing, reading. One pities any future historian who attempts a coherent narrative account. Even John Le Carre, hardly known for simplicity of plot, would find it difficult to

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include more than a small portion of the P2 affair in a single novel.

As the matter now moves from the phase of revelation to the phase of investigation and, one hopes, prosecution, it seems worthwhile to pose a few general questions: What kind of man joined the P2? Did the organization as such have any overall goals? What were the sources of its cohesion and power? Finally, it is important to consider what the P2 affair can add to our understanding of Italian society and politics.

Licio Gelli was not only the Venerable Master of the Lodge but also the best incarnation of the values and worldview it represented. Particularly striking was Gelli's desire and ability to play all the angles simultaneously in any given situation. His wartime record would have put any mere double agent to shame. Gelli served as a Blackshirt in the Spanish Civil War and with the Italian occupation forces in Yugoslavia. After the Italian armistice of September 8, 1943, he returned to Italy and collaborated closely with the German occupiers in Tuscany. At the same time, however, he seems to have maintained extensive relations with Italian partisans. Some reports even presented him as a dangerous Communist agent. At one point, in fact, the German SS, the police of Mussolini's rump government, and the partisans were all after Gelli. At war's end, he was officially accused of collaborationism for turning over an officer who had conducted anti-German sabotage. He saved himself by providing Italian counterespionage with a list of his old Fascist comrades who had collaborated actively with the Nazis.

Although the war seems rather distant to most Americans, one must bear in mind that, between 1943 and 1945, Italy experienced a kind of civil war, not just an anti-German struggle. Alignments formed during the war years continue to influence and shape the conduct of Italy's political power structure. It seems, in fact, that Gelli may have feared revelations concerning his wartime conduct. In early 1979, Mino Pecorelli, an investigative journalist of neofascist persuasion and a long-time member of the P2, obtained a copy of the document in which Gelli had named the collaborators. Pecorelli made some use of it in a series of scathing attacks on the Masons, and apparently threatened to publish the list. On March 20, 1979, Mino Pecorelli was murdered.

Leaving aside the question of P2 involvement in the killing, Gelli's wartime record is an important key to understanding the nature of the organization he came to head. One distinguishing feature of the Lodge members was a cult of personal survival and personal aggrandizement at the expense of any other considerations. After reading the motley membership list, one Italian journalist remarked: "What holds these people together . . . is a total lack of principle . . . only concern with a successful career, a hurry to get rich, a fear of being blackmailed. . . ."

An instinctive example of unrestrained careerism is Gelli's lieutenant, Fabrizio Trecca. The Italians have a word that suits Trecca to perfection: *portaborse*, which might be translated as "briefcase carrier." He was virtually a professional sidekick. Already as a young medical student, Trecca understood that powerful patronage could compensate for professional or intellectual inadequacies. He put himself at the service of a famous surgeon in his declining years, attending to social details, correspondence, and providing company. Trecca's reward was a position at the medical school at the University of L'Acquila. A rotund repository of amusing anecdotes, Trecca made his way into high society, becoming personal physician to prominent journalists and finally Gelli, a noted hypochondriac. In the course of his rise, Trecca acquired all the trappings of contemporary high-technology *machismo*: a red Ferrari, a pilot's license, scuba equipment, and, through the help of some friendly admirals, a captaincy in the naval reserves. Needless to say, his scalpels languished. In February of this year, Gelli rewarded Trecca's loyalty with the presidency of CIT, the travel agency operated by the Italian state railroads.

Trecca's case is perhaps somewhat extreme, yet along with the stories of Gelli and other P2 members it suggests that the Lodge was essentially a conspiracy of mediocrities. The members were managers rather than genuine entrepreneurs and political second-raters rather than statesmen; they were bureaucrats, party hacks, and military officers whose talent and competence were insufficient to win them the promotions they coveted. The list of 953 members confiscated from Gelli contains the name of not one thinker, not one scientist, not one artist, not one creative or innovative individual. It also includes virtually no one who could be described in any sense as courageous. The members of the P2 joined because they realized full well their personal weakness and the fact that they needed help to succeed. In their initiation oaths, they promised above all to aid, comfort, and defend each other.

Indeed, it is clear that the members were seeking protection. They seemed to share a general fear of somehow being exposed publicly. Indeed, Gelli once described the Lodge as an organization devoted to protecting those who had been unjustly accused. The *piduisti* were also obsessed with protecting the wealth and privileges they had already secured. Among the few things common to all Lodge members was the sense that the Italian Communists were a major threat to those privileges. On the eve of the June 1975 local elections, the wife of General Raffaele Giudice, a Lodge member now in prison in connection with an oil tax evasion scandal, put her fears rather succinctly: "What will happen? Will the Communists take power? We have to think about our money, our position. We run the risk of losing everything."

THE P2 POLITICAL platform had only one fixed plank: anti-Communism. In the mid-1970s, Gelli offered a plan for Italy's salvation to the president of the Republic, Giovanni Leone (later ousted in connection with the Lockheed bribery affair). Gelli's solution at that time called for tightening control over all the information media, a two-year ban on trade union activity, creation of a strong party to the right of Christian Democrats, and forcible suffocation of any protest. In more recent years, however, the supple Gelli had come to view a strong alliance between the Christian Democrats and the Socialists as the only viable bulwark against Communism. It

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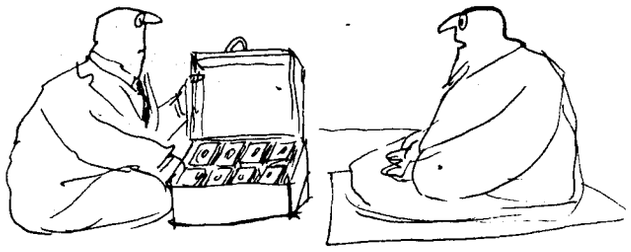

"You're right! That is a lot of guilt to be carrying around."

was no accident that precisely those two parties were best represented in the Lodge. Some have gone so far as to suggest that Gelli was really a modern social democrat in the German style, although one suspects that Chancellor Schmidt might be less than pleased with the analogy. It would appear that Gelli's visceral anti-Communism, coupled with his impressive array of international connections, made him *persona grata* with some American policy makers. He was very well acquainted, for example, with Vice-President Bush. Gelli was even in a position to predict that Alexander Haig would become Secretary of State well before last November's election. In any case, the flexibility of the P2's program indicates that simple preservation of privilege, rather than any particular view of Italy's future or the national interest, lay at the heart of the Lodge's political activity.

A good deal of the Lodge's influence lay in the fact that it could marshal an impressive set of connections at both the national and international levels. Although there are indications of some ties to the Mafia, most of the connections were of a fairly standard business and public relations nature.

An instrument more typical of the P2 was, quite simply, information. Gelli was a compulsive accumulator and organizer of documents, testimony, photographs, and other assorted data. Even from his Paraguayan exile, he can threaten many influential people with the files still in his possession. Gelli's archive has included material as diverse as a CIA memorandum alleging links between the KGB and red terror in Italy, copies of contracts for the purchase of Saudi Arabian oil, and photos of Pope John Paul II sunbathing naked by the pool. More important for the Lodge's cohesion was the fact that Gelli had intimate knowledge of each member's private life and business dealings, each member's needs and personal inclinations. Gelli established an extensive network of informants, but strengthened his own hand by doing everything himself when it came to organizing the information and maintaining the dossiers. The Venerable Master may not have been an especially charismatic leader, but he was certainly a first-class file clerk.

Those who have had exasperating dealings with the Italian bureaucracy might suggest that Gelli's efficiency legitimated his claim to influence. But not only in Italy is it possible to gain power by accumulating and organizing information. To cite only one well-known case, it was precisely Stalin's willingness to attend to menial detail and organizational matters that permitted him to triumph over his more brilliant but less clerically-minded colleagues like Trotsky and Bukharin.

TO WHAT extent *is* the P2 affair a distinctly Italian phenomenon? A report on the ABC news program *20/20* portrayed the Lodge as an expression of an Italian desire for seclusion or privacy, reflected also in the building of internal courtyards and enclosed gardens. Such an analysis is not convincing. The gardens and courtyards have a rather specific origin in the climate, population density, and urban development of Italy. Furthermore, if one were to generalize about the Italians (a dangerous proposition at best), "secretive" probably would not be one of the first adjectives that came to mind. Perhaps the P2 affair fits in a bit better with the image of Italians in works such as Edward Banfield's *The Moral Basis of a Backward Society*. The Lodge members could not be termed "amoral familists" in the strict sense, since they transferred some loyalty to an organization beyond the nuclear family. On the other hand, membership in the P2 also reflected a highly developed sense of self-interest and perhaps a lack of "public spirit" in the Anglo-Saxon sense.

Yet fraternal organizations devoted to promoting the success of their members are by no means alien to the Anglo-Saxon world. The *Official Preppy Handbook* contains a list of private clubs at the most prestigious American universities which are in many respects cousins of the P2. It appears, for example, that Skull and Bones at Yale has provided a rather disproportionate number of American foreign policy makers, and its initiation rites are by any account far more closely guarded than those of the Italian Freemasons. The appeal of secrecy, arcane rituals, and "brotherhood" seems universal, not simply Italian. It might also be instructive to compare the gatherings at Bohemian Grove to the workings of the P2. The functions of such organizations and the motivations of those who join them are perhaps not so different as those on this side of the Atlantic might like to believe.

A difference probably does exist, a difference of method rather than underlying intent. The organized distribution of influence and perpetuation of elites is pernicious enough, but the P2 Lodge also conducted genuinely fraudulent and criminal activity on an impressive scale. Maybe the fact that so many of the members were *arrivistes* in the social sense gave the acquisition of wealth a particular importance. Perhaps in an anthropological sense, one could find certain parallels between the P2 and the Mafia, but it still seems difficult to account for this in terms of some distinctly Italian quality.

Unfortunately, however, the P2 affair does offer considerable insight into the state of national feeling among the upper class and upper middle class of Italy. Along with extensive reports on the P2, the May 31 edition of the weekly *L'Espresso* carried a list of 181 people and companies guilty of illegal exportation of capital. The list includes Gelli and other prominent *piduisti*, but most of those listed are not Masons; and the list is unhappily only the miniscule tip of an imposing iceberg. The members of the P2 Lodge, with their oaths to each other and to the Venerable Master, but not to their country, were part

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of a much larger category: those who have given up any attempt to help Italy out of its political, social, and economic impasse. Rather, they take their money out of the country, they seek prosperity through overseas connections, they export their sons and daughters to the United States for an education and a future, and sometimes they emigrate themselves. In the early years of this century, poor Italians came to the United States. More recently, it is the upper classes that have come, fleeing the Communists, fleeing an economy that they themselves help destroy. . . . Unlike most immigrants, they lack any willingness to defend the Old Country from criticism. Indeed, they are anxious to lead the chorus. Furthermore, for every one who leaves the country, untold members with the same attitudes remain. In this unfortunate sense, the P2 was representative. Indeed, while dismantling the Lodge may help break up several networks of corruption, one fears it will do little to overcome the antipatriotic sentiments and actions of many who could offer Italy a great deal.

Screen

POET IN RESIDENCE

THE THEATRICAL & THE PERSONAL

THE SENTIMENTAL favorite this summer is a film called *Stevie*, about the poet Stevie Smith. Nothing could seem less likely to succeed in today's market than this obscure English film about an obscure English poet, and indeed, *Stevie* has had a great deal of trouble. First its director-producer, Robert Enders, had difficulty even raising the money to make the film. He was only able to do so in the end because *Stevie*, being a modest project, had a very modest budget. (Actually, $500,000, which was its entire production cost, is not "modest" by current standards. It's ridiculous. It's so little money, the film could have been financed out of the budget for coffee breaks on most Hollywood movies.) Once Enders got his film in the can, though — on a seventeen-day shooting schedule — his troubles still weren't over. In fact, he might have felt that they were just beginning. For now that he had the film, he also had no money left to advertise it. This meant that despite *Stevie*'s having been financed by an American company, First Artists, it had no way to reach American audiences. After opening in Los Angeles to some good reviews in 1978, it closed again for lack of public response, and then languished undistributed for three years.

Among three unlikely musketeers who came to *Stevie*'s rescue was the redoubtable *New York Times* film critic, Vincent Canby. When *Stevie* got a two-day New York premiere early in the summer at the Thalia theater, Manhattan's oldest repertory movie house and one of the few that still does its own programing instead of buying pre-packaged classics, Canby saw the film and liked it enough to plead its cause in his review. Amazingly, his words did not fall on deaf ears. The owner of the 68th Street Playhouse, where *Le Cage aux Folles* had played for years, decided to put one of the piles of money he'd made out of that film into opening *Stevie*. It all goes to show that good sometimes does come out of evil.

By now, dear reader, you must be wondering whether I think this film is worth all the bother that's been taken over it. I'm not accustomed to addressing you directly this way, but it seems appropriate just this once because it's one of the things that Stevie herself (Glenda Jackson) does in the movie. And since the movie definitely *is* worth the bother, I want to get you into the right frame of mind to be receptive to it. Addressing the audience is only one of a number of highly theatrical techniques that *Stevie* uses with great success. Others include restricting the film almost entirely to a single two-room set — the parlor and kitchen of Stevie's semi-detached house — and relying upon a dazzling virtuoso performance by Ms. Jackson, who is on screen for all but a few of the film's 102 minutes. The theatricality of the film is not surprising since it's based on a play by Hugh Whitemore that he himself adapted to the screen and in which Jackson starred originally on the London stage. What is surprising is how compelling theatricality becomes in this film. A stagey look is usually the limitation of a movie adapted from a successful play. In this case, the limitation is turned into an achievement.

The reason lies in the material from which *Stevie* has been made. It lies in Stevie Smith's life and personality, and in the poetry she wrote that is incorporated into the film. Stevie Smith, who died in 1971, was a kind of English Emily Dickinson. A spinster who lived in the drab London suburb of Palmer's Green with her "Lion Aunt," as Stevie called her — Mona Washbourne re-creates beautifully the role she played opposite Jackson on the stage — Smith led a rather sheltered life to say the least. To auntie's dismay, Stevie backed out of her engagement to the only suitor she ever had (Alec McCowen); and aside from a clerical job that for many years took her into the city every day, her only outings were to readings of her own poetry, the occasional cocktail party for the *literati*, and, once, to visit with the queen, who was awarding her the Queen's Gold Medal for Poetry that year.

Despite this reclusive, not to say dull, existence, Stevie was, like Dickinson, a woman of brilliant, passionate, often audacious imagination. Her poetry is in-dwelling, and like Dickinson's, it is inevitably obsessed with the one experience in which everyone is as lonely as an eccentric spinster — death. (Besides her poetry, the one surface sign that Stevie's life wasn't as placid and ordinary as it appeared was that she tried to slit her wrists.) The state of being reflected in both her poetry and Dickinson's is not loneliness so much as solitude, which requires moral courage where loneliness is merely self-pitying. It's one thing to be rather chipper and sassy in the face of simple boredom, quite another thing to be that way in facing up to death. In Stevie Smith's poetry, the erotic energy of life pours into the meditations on death. Her voice was filled not with loneliness, but with a certain self-sufficiency and calm that male poets never seem to achieve. It is a quality that

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Glenda Jackson's performance projects with flawless ease.

The paradox of *Stevie* is that by being theatrical, it gets across how intensely personal Stevie Smith's poetry was. To be honest, I suspect that the film succeeds better in this than the play did. The stage is of course the right place for poetry. Even the most private, conversational modern verse is still a formal language better suited to the rigors of the stage than to movies, which are by nature a casual, less structured medium. What movies offer, in place of the enormous presence that live acting brings to a role in a theater, is immediacy and intimacy. Movies have a more complete illusion of entering someone's private life the way they can enter the private space of a character's home. By imposing a number of theatrical conventions on a movie, *Stevie* manages to strike just the right balance between the two. This approach enlarges the movie to make room for its subject's poems. They become inseparable from her life. The stage techniques make us see the movie as a deliberate artifice, like a poem — a reality that requires a certain level of formal composition to sustain itself. As a consequence, Glenda Jackson is able to weave excerpts from Stevie Smith's poems seamlessly into the dialogues and monologues of her performance. We recognize the poetry as poetry, yet accept it as a language that came naturally to this woman.

The result is very moving. It creates a reverberation between screen and stage, a resonance, that gives *Stevie* unexpected depth. In a recent interview occasioned by the film's newfound popularity — it has now opened at a second theater in New York — Robert Enders spoke of his commitment to go on making "quality films." The commitment is obviously sincere. *Stevie* isn't the first one he's made. Seven years ago, he and Jackson formed a production company that has done movie adaptations of two other stage plays in which she starred. I must admit that when I hear the term "quality film," I invariably wince. It's used as a rule by people who think that movies have no inherent "quality" of their own — that they have to import it always from some other medium. Enders may be someone who thinks that way himself. But at least in *Stevie*, he shows that when he uses this term, he knows whereof he speaks.

COLIN L. WESTERBECK, JR.

Stage

FLAWED & FASCINATING

THREE NEW PLAYS

THE FAMILY PLAY HAS been steadily reasserting its primacy in American drama. Two recent examples that have attracted a great deal of attention — both praise and blame — are Woody Allen's *The Floating Light Bulb*, which has finished its run at Lincoln Center, and Lanford Wilson's *A Tale Told*, the latest installment in the chronicle of the Talley family of Lebanon, Missouri. (Before seeing *A Tale Told*, I visited the Talleys on Broadway, looking in on the successful run of *Fifth of July*. It still seems to me the best of the Talley plays, but I found the production disappointing, lacking the cleanness and the clarity of a performance that I saw at Temple University last year.) *A Tale Told* is a companion play to *Talley's Folly*, which won a Pulitzer for Wilson last year. While Sally Talley and Matt Friedman are getting engaged — the action of *Folly* — the rest of the Talleys are up in the Talley Place splashing around in a bath of revelation. Something seems to have happened to the clan. Except for old Mr. Talley, a cutthroat Christian, at once self-righteous and ruthless (a bravura part as Fritz Weaver plays it), the family members are blandly nasty, built out of 1940s realistic touches and caricatured bigotry. Buddy, home on emergency leave — he helped drive Matt off the place before the curtain went up — tells about tasting Italian coffee and having to spit it out on the ground. In the real world, many an anti-Semite likes kosher pickles and many an anti-Italian likes Italian coffee; but in Wilson's Talley world, narrowness is always complete — political, economic, social, gustatory. These characters, who have a certain credibility when we hear them described in a sentence or two in *Folly* or *July*, become animated platitudes when they walk the stage for more than two hours. Even Lottie (the earlier generation's counterpart of Sally), who is dying of radium poisoning (capitalistic greed: she worked in a clock factory), has to use lines like "kiss my ass" to assert herself, to get her laugh.

Aside from the escape of Sally, who appears briefly at the end of the play, the main action in *Tale* is the decision to sell the clothing factory to a conglomerate (1944 seems a bit early for conglomerates), an act of both community and professional irresponsibility, since the machinery will be moved out of town, rendering many people jobless, and the quality product will presumably give way to shoddy. There is a subplot about an illegitimate daughter of Eldon Talley (father of Sally and Buddy), but it seems to be as pointless as it is uninteresting. Perhaps it is supposed to illustrate the way Eldon "has allowed his morals to be eroded by his business sense," as a publicity throwaway put it, but Eldon is the spokesman for quality rather than quick money, and therefore moral in business if not in private life. The fatal telegram, so laboriously set up early in the play, gives the family a momentary jolt, the play a sentimental moment, but the death of Timmy on Saipan is lost in the general flurry of discovery and recrimination. Would be lost, that is, if Wilson did not insist on sending the character on stage to describe his death and make a point about the cosmetics of home-front propaganda, the integral use of which point would not be clear even if it were convincingly presented.

All in all, *A Tale Told* is a standard family package (adultery, illegitimacy, potential incest, greed, generation gap, sibling rivalry, death by cancer, death on the battlefield), but the characters elicit neither the distaste they might command as types nor sympathy as human beings — except when individual performers (Helen Stenborg, Patricia Wettig) give the semblance of life to Wilson's surface figures.

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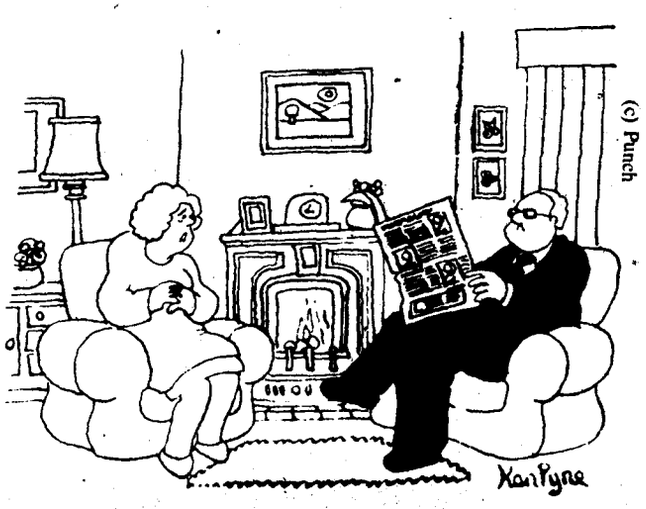
WOODY ALLEN'S PLAY, like Wilson's, is set in the 1940s, but the Pollacks, walking the poverty line in Canarsie, are far removed from the Talleys, economically and geographically. And historically, since the war seems not to exist at all in the Allen play. Max Pollack, who, as Allen said of his father, works "a million short-lived jobs" (*New Yorker*, February 4, 1974), is currently a waiter in debt to the loan-sharks. He is waiting for the lucky number that will let him escape his family and his situation, and go off with the young woman who makes him feel that he is still young himself. Enid is a nag. The suggestion is that that role has been imposed on her by her attempt to keep the family afloat and by her own sense of her loss of youth, but she comes across simply as a shrew, making verbal attempts to one-up everyone in the house; this reading was emphasized in production by the fact that Beatrice Arthur brought so much of Maude into the character. Of the boys, Steve is a street-wise kid going wrong to escape the household, and Paul, who like the youthful Woody Allen spends hours practicing magic tricks, retreats into his bedroom and his fantasy to insulate his fear of the world and the distress he feels with the family. Brian Backer played the character with Allen mannerisms, but whatever autobiographical overtones the play has, the character comes across as a young man hopelessly trapped by his inability to operate in society.

These characters take part in an action which imposes a Tennessee Williams plot on a Clifford Odets setting. This is another case of the "Gentleman Caller" (the best conceived character and beautifully played at Lincoln Center by Jack Weston) — a down-at-heels agent whom Enid hopes will package Paul and his magic and lift the family out of their rut. Her hope proves as elusive as that of Amanda's for the "Gentlemen Caller" of *The Glass Menagerie*. The Odets quality lies in the New York poverty setting (a 1930s play set in 1945?) and in the pathetic-comic mixture Allen attempts. Unfortunately, the Allen script sounds like a series of one-liners imposed on a schmaltz situation; the comic lines in Odets clearly belong to the characters.

Allen recently told a Chicago *Tribune* interviewer that he had no immediate plans for another play because there is little point in writing one unless, like Chekhov and Strindberg, you can come up with a masterpiece. To aspire to Chekhov is admirable, but a comparison of Enid Pollack and Bessie Burgess — and the characters have many similarities — suggests that Allen still has to get to *Awake and Sing!* before he can make it to *Uncle Vanya*.



"You never use emotional blackmail against me any more."

WHEN I SAW Jim Leonard, Jr.'s *The Diviners* in August, it was probably the only show in town with rave reviews from Kuala Lumpur and Manila posted outside the theater. It had played at Circle Repertory early last season and, after its run, had gone on a Far Eastern tour sponsored by USICA (the unfortunate acronym for what was once the U.S. Information Service). Now, fresh from an engagement in Saratoga Springs, it had come again to Circle Rep. By the time this review appears, it may have ended its limited run or then again it may be off to Timbuktu, but it is worth talking about because the play and certainly the author will be heard from again.

The Diviners was first done in November 1979 at Hanover College, Indiana, where Leonard was a student, and it won first prize at the American College Theatre Festival in April 1980. Much publicity has been given to that fact, but *The Diviners* is no more a student play than Leonard, at twenty-five, is an ordinary student. We are used to the appearance of young playwrights — the Sam Shepard of the early 1960s, or the David Mamet of the early 1970s — and it does them less service to cluck over their youth than it does to look at their work.

This brings us back to Lanford Wilson again. A new playwright appearing at Wilson's Circle Rep might be expected to name the older playwright as one of the chief influences on him, but in this case the Wilson of *The Rimers of Eldritch* can be seen in *The Diviners* without the aid of the publicity throwaways. Leonard, like Wilson, wants to suggest a community (Zion, Indiana, pop. 40), and to use it as both the setting and one of the dramatic elements for the central action of the play. As in *Rimers*, the performers are on stage most of the time, sitting on benches, waiting their turn to step into scenes. Their characters thus become presences, coloring the events even when they remain quiet, properly unresponsive not to detract from center stage. Leonard, like Wilson, is primarily a verbal playwright, and he uses overlap and repetition to get from scene to scene. When C.C. Showers asks Buddy if his itching is "better," the "better" carries into the next scene in which Melvin is trying to teach Dewey to dance. Such connections are hardly intrinsic, but they are serviceable devices to help make a totality of the fragments that constitute both the play and the town.

There is a great deal of incidental and sometimes humorous material in the play — Dewey's attempt to court Darlene in spite of her ferociously proper aunt, Basil's trouble with his bicycle, the laziness of Melvin, jokes about Hoover since the play is set in the early 1930s, Darlene's retelling of the story of Adam and Eve (standard fake-folk Biblical comedy, this last) — and bits of rural wisdom, usually from Basil. I would like to

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think that Basil's comments are quietly comic, too, but the play's use of that character, to open and close, putting a frame around the action, suggests that Basil is to be taken seriously. The main plot is a double one, built around the confrontation between C.C. Showers and Buddy Layman. Buddy is an "idiot boy," to use the play's words, a child of fourteen whose condition stems from his having almost drowned at five, when his mother died saving him. He has a panic fear of water, sure that he cannot breathe when it touches him, and as a result he is suffering from ringworm that keeps him continually scratching in an attempt to ease the itch. C.C. is a former preacher, running away from a vocation which he never believed in, who arrives in Zion, which has been churchless, preacherless since the church burned down. He resists the attempts of the townspeople — the women primarily — to force him back to the pulpit, but he is a natural preacher/teacher, and he slowly wins Buddy to the kind of faith in him that lets Buddy risk the rain, then the river.

At the end, C.C. gets Buddy to bathe in the river, but the women arrive *en masse* (if four is a mass), singing, "Shall We Gather at the River," coming to give witness to another soul saved, and C.C., in his distress, argues with the women while Buddy, who now is convinced that water does not interfere with breathing, goes out too deep and is carried away. This scene is necessary thematically, but I have some trouble with it. The naturalistic simplicity of the other scenes makes the artificiality of this one the more obvious. I am not thinking of the actual staging of the drowning — a mimetic suggestion of the boy and his would-be savior under water — but of the fact that C.C.'s absorption with his own problem allows him, still standing in the water, to lose sight of Buddy alongside him.

Leonard is playing with his title. Buddy is a diviner, able to predict the weather, to find water with a rod. The women are diviners, on the lookout for small miracles, in need of the comfort of a clerical presence, a figure who can restore community to Zion. C.C. is a diviner, able to touch the heart of Buddy and of Buddy's sister, who falls in love with the older man. The theme is treated comically, when Buddy guesses how many jelly beans are in a prize jar, but that event — transferred to C.C. — helps to trigger the final catastrophe. There is an ambiguity to the play that is a little disturbing, for it is not so much the ambiguity of artistic richness as a conflict between implicit and explicit presentation of the theme. Given the drowning of Buddy, which is the failure of C.C.'s best human impulses, the play would seem to be ironic about the usefulness of trust, of faith, and the longing of the women for a salvational presence, which turns out to be destructive. At the end, however, Basil — who has earlier called Buddy's condition a "blessing" since he predicts the weather — says that the death is also a "blessing," but for whom (Buddy? the town?) I am not quite sure. Besides, it would make C.C. the "Showers of blessing," as the old hymn says, and I am not sure I am ready for that. The suggestion that the town absorbs the eccentric and the violent and continues to flourish is not so much dramatized as stated. And that final speech does not appear to be ironic — as the epilogue to *Death of a Salesman* is — at least in the playing at the Circle Rep.

The Diviners is a fascinating play, despite its flaws, and it introduces a playwright with a good ear for Indiana speech and an observant eye for the tics of character. For me, it is more rewarding than *The Rimers of Eldritch,* but that may be because I first met the Wilson play on the page, where its weaknesses were particularly obvious; and *The Diviners* had the benefit of a generally good production. I never quite believed the sixteen-year-olds of Patricia Wettig and Laura Hughes, but most of the roles fell on the happy side of stereotype. This is the kind of play with which the Circle Rep is most comfortable, and Robert MacNaughton, who was brought in for Buddy, was impressive, not so much in the physical things he found to do, as in the sudden and very revealing changes that he recorded with his face, his eyes, his smile. Altogether, a propitious debut. GERALD WEALES

A MODEL FOR JEWISH-CHRISTIAN EXCHANGE

Jesus Christ the stumbling block

DONALD SENIOR

CONTEMPORARY CHRISTOLOGIES: *A Jewish Response* (Paulist Press, $7.95, 203 pp). is just what its title claims: a thoughtful, spirited Jewish response to selected christologies. Eugene B. Borowitz, its author, is a Professor of Education and Jewish Religious Thought at Hebrew Union-Jewish Institute of Religion in New York, and a well respected theological author who describes himself as a "Reform Jew of religiously traditional bent," a member of the "right wing of liberal Judaism."

Borowitz's study is a model of what sound interreligious exchange should be, a remarkable achievement, especially in the Jewish-Christian dialogue. He is frank, listens well, speaks clearly, and above all goes immediately to the heart of the issue. The heart of the issue between Jews and Christians, as Borowitz flatly states in his opening sentence, is "the Christian doctrine of Christ." Openly confronting such a radical source of disagreement is, in the author's view, a basic ground rule for any religious dialogue that hopes to move beyond merely pragmatic considerations. Hence the book.

With the aid of the American Theological Society, Borowitz chose eleven modern theologians as his dialogue partners. The choices are all good. Looking back, Borowitz regrets not choosing

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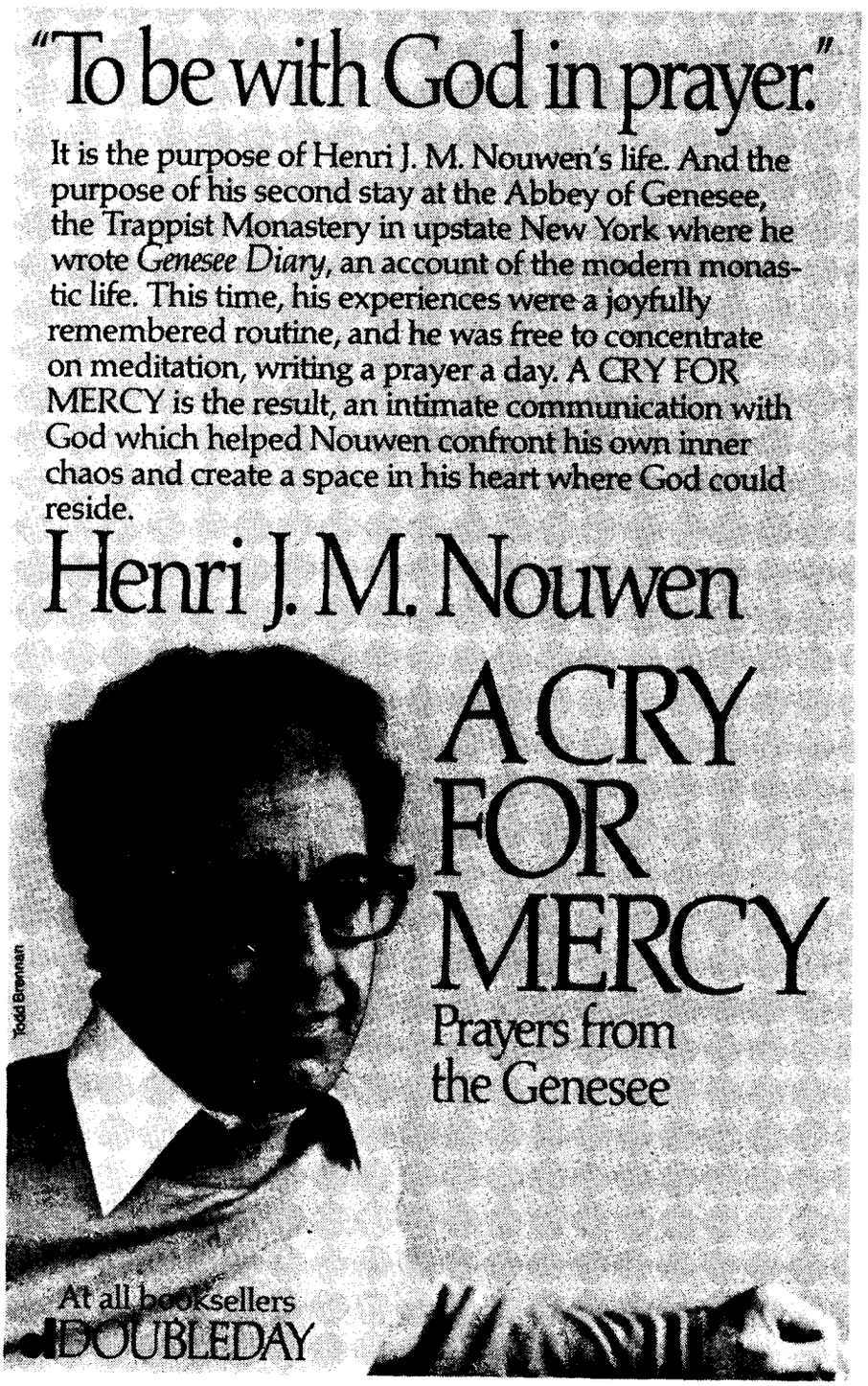
a "right wing Catholic" and an Orthodox theologian as well. If I may add to the list of regrets, I wish he had tackled a liberation theologian and a non-Western christology, too. But what he does, he does well. A succinct treatment of each christology is offered, and then Borowitz selects one or other issue to converse with from a Jewish perspective. Although his statements of these christologies are necessarily brief, I doubt if the authors themselves would feel that their basic ideas have been slighted.

The eleven christologies provide a wide spectrum of viewpoints and issues for substantial dialogue. John Knox is presented as a classic exponent of liberal Protestantism and Borowitz uses this chapter to neatly skewer the false optimism and limited depth of the phenomenological approach used by Knox. Berkouwer, Barth, and Pannenberg are selected as a modern version of "traditional" christologies. Borowitz finds little common ground with the exclusive faith claims of Berkouwer and Barth. Pannenberg's appeal to history provides a more positive opening but Borowitz considers his arguments for the historical cogency of the resurrection to be pallid. Ruether, Söelle, and Schoonenberg are taken as exponents of a renewed effort at a "liberal" position, especially their attempt to interpret the exclusivity of Christian faith claims in social and historical categories. Borowitz dialogues with these authors about the function of religious symbols and about the problems liberals (Christian and Jewish) have maintaining the authority of their traditions.

Rahner and Moltmann are selected as representatives of "post-liberal" christologies. Their appeal to faith exceeds that of the liberals and their use of reason and their sense of universalism go beyond that of traditional christologies. Borowitz's respect for these two theologians is evident, due in part, no doubt, to the fact that their style of theology is analogous to his own—vigorously modern yet respectful of tradition. But they are not spared his critique. Rahner's metaphysical acumen is praised, but Borowitz notes the ambiguity of his mix of faith and reason. Moltmann's use of Jewish sources is found appealing, but Borowitz underlines the limits of his dialectical method.

Some of the most fruitful and extensive dialogue in the book is with the remaining two authors, James Gustafson and H. Richard Niebuhr. Borowitz openly admires the ethical breadth of Gustafson's work and uses the occasion to give a detailed review of Jewish ethical thinking in the post-Kantian era. His highest accolades are reserved for Niebuhr and his treatment of christology

FATHER DONALD SENIOR, C.P., *is associate professor of New Testament Studies at the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago. His most recent book is* A Commentary on the Letters of Peter *(The New Testament Message Series, Michael Glazer, Inc.)*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and culture. This, Borowitz claims, is one area where Jewish thought may have the most to learn from Christianity.

A final chapter tests out whether, as in Rosemary Ruether's notorious dictum, christology is the "left hand of anti-Semitism." Borowitz concludes that, at least in the case of these eleven authors, the charge is not true. Because they are less insistent on the exclusive claims of Christianity and more aware of historical categories, liberals tend to be more positive in their regard for Judaism. Even though he explicitly decries anti-Semitism, Barth's christology makes him "prejudiced" against Jews because he can find no positive religious value in the synagogue. Pannenberg's first edition of *Jesus—God and Man* (1968) also concluded that Judaism as a religion is "done away with" by the Christ event, a position he later explicitly retracted (see the foreword to *The Apostles Creed in the Light of Today's Questions*, 1972). Other than these troubling lapses, Borowitz concludes, while "classic christology was closely associated with anti-Semitism, and while some remnants of it are to be found among traditionalist theologians, other traditionalists as well as liberals and post-liberals have found anti-Semitism antithetical to their understanding of the Christ."

A book like this creates an avalanche

Perhaps the most important lesson we have learned about interpersonal and interreligious dialogue in recent years is that we must make a determined effort to get to know people as they are, not as we, for whatever reason, would have them to be. I do not see, then, that Christians and Jews can come to understand one another better unless they address each other's mature theologies. This can most readily be done in areas where there are common or overlapping beliefs. Yet it will not produce its most significant results until it focuses on the matters wherein they disagree radically with one another.

Eugene B. Borowitz
Contemporary Christologies: A Jewish Response

of reflections for the reader—a sure sign it is doing its job. Allow me to mention a few.

First of all, I hope the pattern that Borowitz sets for interreligious exchange won't be overlooked, in contemporary Jewish-Christian dialogue as in other bilateral discussions. It is not simply that he has understood Christian thinkers remarkably well for someone outside the tradition (and, by the way, forthrightly admits those instances when he cannot comprehend a point); but he is able, and unafraid, to find the areas of radical disagreement. Here, as he states, is where the most fruitful interreligious dialogue will take place. In addition, Borowitz wisely cautions against what he calls "category-error," the kind of non-communication that can take place even within a single tradition when liberals talk past conservatives, and vice versa, because they proceed from entirely different world views and epistemologies. Borowitz suggests, therefore, that the most productive dialogue will happen when liberals of one tradition engage liberals of another—or conservatives of one engage conservatives of another—over the issues that radically separate the two traditions.

Secondly, as a Christian reader I came away from this book sobered. With all the careful nuance and honest exchange this study provides, the gulf between Judaism and Christianity remains vast, perhaps its dimensions even more firmly set. The ultimate stumbling block, as Borowitz's precise logic again and again reveals, is not our tortured historical relationships, not our lack of mutual understanding, or our different styles of religious life. The stumbling block is the figure of Jesus Christ. The heart of authentic Judaism sees no need for any kind of mediating figure between God and humanity. Jesus holds little fascination for Borowitz. While his references to Christ are consistently respectful, he is not in awe of him as a compelling moral paradigm or religious innovator. On more than one occasion, Borowitz mentions that he finds Christian theologians speak of Jesus in too idealized or sentimental a fashion. Those areas where he finds Christian theologians more compatible with Judaism—such as Gustafson's construction of a justice ethic or Niebuhr's models for relating religion to culture—are precisely the areas where, as Borowitz suggests, Christ talk may be "dispensed with" and other categories such as God or commandment may be substituted.

Another classical issue separates Judaism and Christianity and this book reaffirms it in unhesitating tones: the role of law. This topic makes the chapter on Gustafson's theology one of the most informative because Borowitz's review of Jewish ethical thought illustrates the differing tones of Judaism and Christianity. As he states: For the Jew, "commandment is the single most significant link between God and humankind in the Bible. Faith and trust in God, the knowledge of God, the love and fear of God and other such subjective aspects of religion are valued and commended. None is as frequently mentioned when God speaks to the children of Israel as to the details of what God wants them to do." I think that for almost any Christian theologian, reading the Scriptures from the perspective of the New Testament would instinctively reverse the priority which Borowitz, speaking from his Jewish perspective, suggests.

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The vigorous dialogue of the book also highlights some aspects of Jewish thought which remain blurred and in need of further elucidation for a Christian. At several points, Borowitz notes that Judaism sees no need for a special act of redemption on humanity's behalf. There is a remarkable optimism about the ability of humankind to "turn" and to perform the commands God expects of us. Borowitz admits that this optimism has sagged under the horror of the Holocaust and the troubled state of the modern world, but an ultimately optimistic assessment of the human capacity for good, without the need for redemption, remains at the heart of the liberal Jewish perspective. This is an admirable stance but open to charges of naïveté, or at least of being too Western and too technologically inspired. Although it would make the agenda somewhat grim, perhaps the nature of evil should be one of the main topics of further exchange between two religious traditions which are both committed to the redeemability of the world but see it happening in radically different ways.

Another area for continuing discussion is the relationship of Judaism to "the nations." Borowitz touches on this in considering Niebuhr's theology, but the question is not pursued with the same thoroughness as other issues. If Christ is the stumbling block, then so is the question of universalism which from the Christian perspective is at the heart of the Gospel. Traditional Jewish thought did not give much attention to the fate of the non-Jewish religions and their adherents, as Borowitz notes, and one might add, neither did classical christology. Contemporary christology has had to confront this issue and any further dialogue between Jews and Christians will, I suspect, need to do the same.

Borowitz concludes his book with a blessing invoked on behalf of the Gentile theologians he has studied, a break with strict Jewish tradition which allowed blessings only on the *secular* wisdom of Gentiles. It is an act of courage and graciousness typical of the author and his book. One can only hope that the Jewish-Christian dialogue would continue in the same spirit.

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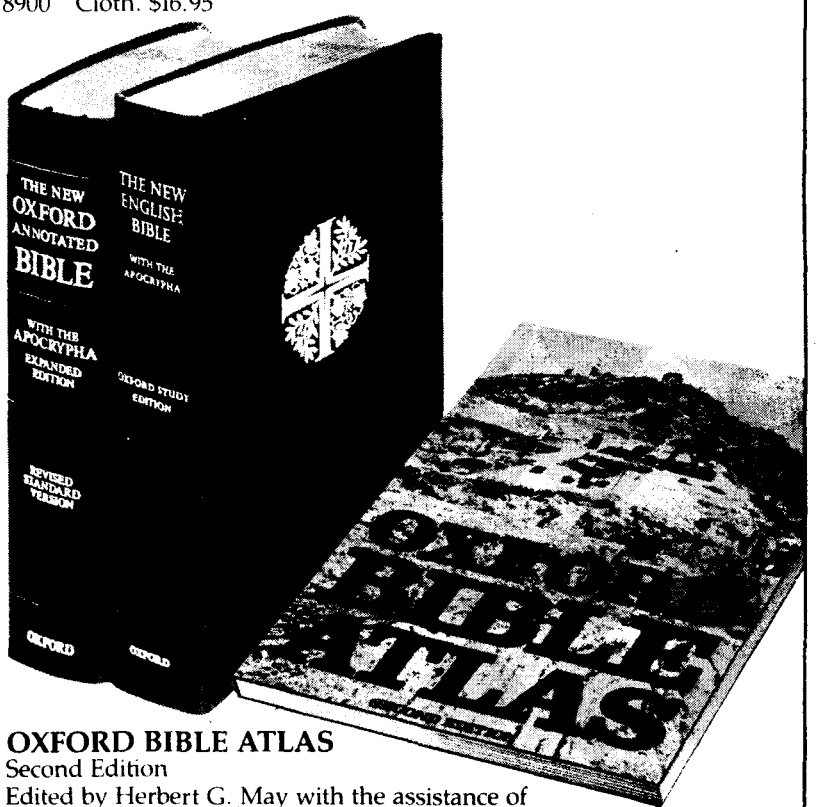

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Books: BOYHOOD'S SOMBER BLESSEDNESS

CZESLAW MILOSZ, the Berkeley professor and 1980 Nobel Prize Winner in Literature, writes in Polish and considers himself primarily a Polish émigré poet. Originally, however, he hails from Lithuania, a region which he himself refers to as "those foggy expanses that books, even textbooks, rarely provide information about (or, if they do, provide false)." His novel *The Issa Valley* (1955), which has now been translated into English, is an attempt to recreate his Lithuanian boyhood and to capture the unique atmosphere of that region with its amalgam of nationalities, traditions, customs, and beliefs. Thomas Venclova, a dissident Lithuanian writer (who has recently settled in the United States) and an authority on Lithuanian literature, not without regret claims that "this novel belongs to a certain conceivable, ideal Lithuanian literature: We have these types and motifs, there are these landscapes and seasons" — he continues — "but alas, we have no novel in which everything could be united into such an integral and beautiful entity. The novel belongs to Polish literature. However, from a certain point of view, this is ultimately unimportant."

It is certainly unimportant for Milosz himself, who gives evidence, even in this very novel, of exceptional freedom from bondage to nationalism and a keen awareness of the absurdities and potential for harm which too much attention to questions of language and nationality can provoke. It is also unimportant for Milosz's foreign readers, for despite his strong identification with Lithuanian land and people, his book reflects a broader vision and deals with metaphysical issues and theological considerations of general interest.

The Issa Valley is essentially a *Bildungsroman* set in the heavy atmosphere of the Lithuanian countryside and structured as a series of vignettes strung together in no particular order. Cumulatively, however, these vignettes coalesce to create a sense of the locale and reflect not only the growing pangs of its young hero, Thomas Surkont, but also the Lithuanian way of life in the early twentieth century, and the entire nexus of issues which has preoccupied Milosz during his childhood and afterwards.

THE ISSA VALLEY

Czeslaw Milosz
Translated by Louis Iribarne
Farrar, Straus & Giroux, $13.95, 288 pp.

Regina Grol-Prokopczyk

There is a duality of vision throughout this thinly-veiled autobiographical work. The central character of the book is thirteen years old when the novel ends, and many of his emotions and discoveries are those of a youngster. Assuming the role of an omniscient narrator, however, Milosz repeatedly allows himself room for commentaries and insights acquired at a later stage of his life. Thus — through selective illustration — we are offered an account of the physical, emotional, and intellectual evolution of the young hero during the actual time framework of the novel, but there are also anticipations, references to the past (e.g., accounts of the grandmother's youth), and even remote past (for example, the references to his sixteenth century relative enmeshed in anti-Trinitarian disputes). This overlapping of mature and childish reflections and the duality of perception account, partially at least, for the ambivalent tone of the novel. On the one hand it is a nostalgic foray into the past and an attempt to salvage that blessedness and contentment that Milosz's Lithuanian boyhood afforded. On the other hand, however, the novel reflects many more somber preoccupations. It is replete with anguished souls (Balthazar, Grandmother Dilbin), with references to human failure, divisions, and existential dilemmas. Milosz's hero, though young and fascinated by the surrounding reality, becomes also familiar with the snobberies of nationality, language, and social status. He is even more acutely aware of the dichotomy and ambivalence in one's interaction with nature: with nature's giving and taking; with one's belonging to it and yet not belonging.

The autobiographical character of the novel can easily be ascertained by comparing the experiences and passions of Thomas Surkont (the botanical and zoological bent, for instance) with those which Milosz openly admits to on the pages of his other books, like *The Native Realm* or his *Visions at the San Francisco Bay*.

Milosz's elusive goal, as he put it in the latter work, has been: "to convey my entire bewilderment at 'being here' in one unachievable sentence, in which would simultaneously appear the granularity and smell of my skin, the entire contents of my memory, and all of my current agreements and disagreements." The writing of *The Issa Valley* has certainly been informed by a similar impulse. This poetic novel is an attempt to come to grips — retrospectively — with the totality of Milosz's feelings and perceptions as a young boy. It is replete with detailed descriptions of seasons, places, hunts, and the young hero's sensual response to them. But it also contains marvelous passages of lyrical contemplation, reflections on metaphysical issues (duality of body and mind, for instance), and expressions of fear of the supernatural. Indeed, through references to spirits, demons, the devil, the pagan gods, and a variety of local superstitions the supernatural is given a concrete reality in the novel.

The Issa Valley is a unique book. In some respects it conforms to traditional belletristic conventions. In many passages it approximates nineteenth-century realistic novels (e.g., in the descriptions of nature and subtle renditions of sexual awakening), yet there is simultaneously a disturbing, roguish quality about it. Pomposity, snobbery, and duplicity are subtly ridiculed. Narrow-mindedness and blind adherence to ideals and causes

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is scoffed at, although again in a rather clever and delicate manner. Throughout the book Lithuania is viewed with affection, yet without saccharine, sentimental nostalgia.

Louis Iribarne's translation is very competent. He is sensitive to the ambivalent tone of the novel, to the slang expressions and regional deviations from standard Polish in the original, and he reflects these very ably in his translation. Iribarne is particularly successful in his rendition of the various folk songs adduced in the novel.

Power is their mistress

FATHER'S DAY

Eugene Kennedy

Doubleday, $13.95, 488 pp.

Paul Connolly

IS IT yourself knows the meaning of "baloney"? The common notion is that it's a corruption of bologna. But I have it from me Irish uncle, Francis Griffith, that it's a pervasion of blarney by Brooklynites in the 1930s. Baloney, blarney: whatever the Irish kiss, they have a way with words. So here's a book of balargny, and a large mouthful it is.

Telling the tale is Austin Kenna, eighty years old, fifty of them in halter as professor and don at the University of Notre Dame. His brogue is as thick as Guinness, his pieties as old as potatoes, and his story concerns Father Thomas Kinsella, president of Notre Dame in 1983 (after Father Hesburgh "left for that big international job"). Father Tom's torment is to decide whether there's most honor in being president of N.D., becoming cardinal archbishop of Chicago, or marrying an attractive, empathetic actress — three alternatives present to him throughout the story.

Tom's the spit and image of his father, old P. B. (" 'Powerful Bastard,' some said the initials stood for"), who parlayed a football scholarship under the Rock into a bit of bad business with the Chicago mob into a career as master-builder of Catholic schools and churches. About a third of the book flashes back to the father's career in the Depression and again World War II, thereby suggesting how the son inherits his father's lust for power. Woven through this main story are the troubles of other priests with alcohol, homosexuality, and the question: "Would St. Paul have used television if he were living today?"

"Power has many meanings and many uses," says Father Tom, and the use of power is Kennedy's theme. If there is a lesson here about Irish American Catholics, it is that piety is their bride but power is their mistress.

The book is a good read but corny as beef and cabbage. There are too many shamrocks in the style and too much sham in the story. At one point, the ambitious P. B. tries to have his way with an alderman's secretary, "lathering her up with so much flattery that she was slick enough to swim the English Channel." But, we are told, "She waved a blarney-repelling hand at him as he passed." Many readers will find themselves making a similar gesture.

The most troubling quality of this novel, finally, is that the blarney becomes manneristic and the irreverence is shoddy — cutting neither sharply nor deeply enough toward some deserving bones. There is more than a hint of self-parody in the prose and more than a trace of cynicism in the depiction of Irish American Catholicism. Perhaps I should not ask for more than entertainment from a popular novel, but a professor of psychology and author of two dozen books on human nature might have drawn more than caricatures.

REVIEWERS

REGINA GROL-PROKOPCZYK, *a member of the faculty of Empire State College, Buffalo, is spending next year writing a book on Milosz.*

PAUL CONNOLLY, *associate professor of English at Yeshiva University, has written for the* New York Times, National Review, America, Newsday, *and other journals.*

ROBERT L. WILKEN *is a professor of theology at the University of Notre Dame.*

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In Brief

THE GNOSTIC DIALOGUE. THE EARLY CHURCH AND THE CRISIS OF GNOSTICISM. *By Pheme Perkins. Paulist Press, $6.95, 250 pp.*

In the wake of the publication of an English translation of the ancient Gnostic writings from Nag Hammadi in Egypt several years ago, it has been tempting for historians and religious thinkers to set forth comprehensive and arresting interpretations of this famous ancient religious movement. Pheme Perkins, associate professor of theology at Boston College, is not uninterested in these larger questions, but her book is primarily a careful analysis of a segment of Gnostic literature, the so called "revelational dialogues," i.e. those works which portray a dialogue between a heavenly revealer and gnostic hero. The heart of the book is a scholarly treatment of the literary character of these writings, the kinds of stories included in them, the topics discussed, and the polemical intention of the authors. In her reading, Gnosticism appears as an esoteric and elitist movement, which emphasized the radical otherness of God from the world, and was quite out of step not only with the mainstream of Christianity but also other religious movements of its time. In this view, the claim that the Gnostics were early champions of individual creativity, recently popularized by Pagels's *The Gnostic Gospels*, has little foundation and is seen largely as a projection of modern thought onto the ancient sources. The book concludes with a very brief epilogue on modern writers and thinkers who have drawn on Gnostic themes.

ROBERT L. WILKEN

Correspondence

(Continued from page 482)

I have fallen back on that argument which has had little effect in this endless abortion debate, the argument of the unwanted child. But it is an argument that pro-life advocates never address. In less

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civilized times, the problem of the unwanted child was solved by infanticide. Now it is solved first by birth control, and failing that, abortion. Garvey purports that pro-choice sentiments began with the Age of Enlightenment, and that present pro-choice supporters resent the fact that "an older orthodoxy is not willing to accept their victory, and die quietly." That is nonsense. Primitive forms of birth control and abortion have been practiced worldwide since man first learned to count time. And abortion itself was condoned as late as the nineteenth century by the Catholic church, using a time clock of the "ensoulment" of the fetus.

There is nothing new about abortion, or even the definition of when life begins. One has only to read the contradictory testimonies of medical doctors, doctors of the law and of theology in the recent Human Life Statute hearings in Washington, to conclude, yet again, that "life" cannot be pinpointed on a convenient chart. Such a definition, in a free society which separates church and state, must be a matter of personal faith.

To be a champion of life is commendable. But to be a champion of the quality of life, the evaluation of which God or nature bestowed upon human beings, is not a crime.

LINDA BIRD FRANCKE

Ed. Note: Ms. Francke is the author of The Ambivalence of Abortion *(Random House, 1978).* John Garvey returns to this topic on page 485 in this issue.

Sweden, sex, & us

Pittsburgh, Pa.

To the Editors: Dr. Deane W. Ferm in his article, "Is Swedish Sex for Us?" [June 19], raises some very pointed and disquieting issues. He is obviously correct in his evaluation of the non-effectiveness of the Lutheran church in Sweden; the failure of the Roman Catholic church to be heard even in Italy is documented in the same issue in the article, "Abortion 1, Pope 0 — A Crusade that Failed."

The dilemma posed by Dr. Ferm's essay is that with an "unheard" church and a confused legal system, where do we turn?

The so-called "Moral Majority" obviously feels that morality and virtue can be legislated. Indeed, as Dr. Ferm points out, even some of the "Swedish leaders who earlier had bravely cried 'Freedom!' are now ruefully shouting 'Restraints!' 'Restraints!'." Whether or not in a pluralistic society such as ours the "Swedish solution," which Dr. Ferm suggests, can be implemented is very much open to question. The author is in essence suggesting some possible solutions, but is well aware of the differences between the society on which he is reporting and the society in which he lives. While we can learn from the Swedes what not to do, we cannot learn what we can do.

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Dr. Ferm's article deserves careful study and attention as well as expansion and discussion. The pendulum of our society's religious, moral, and social attitudes is certainly swinging as far to the right as it had to the left. Can those of us in the middle come to an agreement without opening a Pandora's box of new issues, or are we indeed fated to leave the field to the extremists on both sides and have our own values either outlawed or discarded?

Only if those in the middle speak up, reach agreement, and take a positive course of action, can we avoid losing the battle that is already in progress. The church-synagogue must not only change but act or else what is now a dilemma will become a victory for extremism of one side or the other — and a loss for most of us.

Dr. Ferm is to be commended for bringing these issues to the forefront; let us hope that he and others will also find some solutions.

SOLOMON M. KAPLAN
Rabbi, Tree of Life Congregation

Sex & security

Wausau, Wisc.

To the Editors: Determining specific norms to guide concrete forms of sexual expression would not be as difficult as Deane Ferm believes in "Is Swedish Sex for Us?" [June 19], if there were greater understanding of the role sex plays in our mental and emotional well-being.

Because we are deciding beings faced with choices, we have an intense need for the sense of security that comes from feelings of trust, self-confidence, and self-worth. Without these feelings, we become indecisive, anxious, distressed, self-absorbed. Intense, unrelieved frustration of this need engenders a feeling of helplessness that can provoke suicide or violence against others. This is why, throughout our lives, we need loving relationships that nourish these feelings. But such relationships become more difficult as we learn distrust and suffer loss of self-esteem from the unloving of others. We learn to insulate these feelings and hide our need for them to protect ourselves from possible unloving, avoiding the emotional vulnerability necessary in loving relationships.

Sexual intimacy can be a way of overcoming these barriers. Vulnerability requires considerable trust and self-esteem. The aura of romantic love creates a sense of well-being and urgency that initially makes vulnerability easier. But if this aura is lacking or dissipated before the couple has established a trust-sustaining environment through committed, continuous mutual giving and receiving that nourishes trust and self-esteem in both, communication of emotional needs is limited to pleasure fulfillment. Without this environment of trust, sex is ineffective as a way of knowing. Basic emotional needs remain insulated and unfilled.

Lack of fulfillment evokes the vague restless dissatisfaction we label boredom, provoking efforts to relieve frustration through sexual variety. Or lack of fulfillment may provoke efforts to dominate the partner, psychologically or physically, because the dominator avoids the risk of emotional vulnerability and the sense of control gives a feeling of security that partially compensates for his lack of trust and self-esteem. But because the basic emotional need remains unfilled, any relief of frustration is only illusory and temporary, leading to a cycle of ever-increasing frustration that can create a dependency on sexual variety or domination and lead to increasingly violent sex, especially against those most easily dominated—children and women. This is why the use of pornography increases and pornography becomes increasingly exploitive and violent toward women and children when a society encourages non-marital sex.

Because the purpose of live-in arrangements is to avoid or postpone commitment, they do not foster the sense of security necessary for the trust required for vulnerability. The aura of romance can be dissipated in prolonged premarital sex or in marriage when one partner is too emotionally or sexually repressed or too emotionally insecure to permit emotional vulnerability. The self-absorption caused by emotional insecurity makes us more sensitive to our own needs and less sensitive to others, making us less capable of the caring, sharing, and cooperating necessary for building a trust-sustaining environment. Failure to achieve emotional vulnerability or establish a trust-sustaining environment are the primary reasons why some marriages begin to drift apart after the first few years.

Recognition that the basic human drive is not the need for sexual expression, but the need for the security that comes from trust, self-confidence, and self-worth; that lasting sexual fulfillment depends on fulfilling this emotional need; and that without the trust-sustaining environment a loving marriage provides, sex frustrates rather than aids fulfillment of this basic emotional need—such recognition would change attitudes and the way sex is used without the need for legal restraints or religious prohibitions.

MARILYN KRAMER

Sex & human nature

Alexandria, Va.

To the Editors: Deane Ferm's article, "Is Swedish Sex For Us?" is enlightening and suggestive. It reminds me of a com-

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ment I often hear these days on the contemporary American scene, to which Dr. Ferm draws a parallel, to the effect that some of the more liberated among us are in the process of reinventing marriage. His positions invite comment along two lines.

For one thing, I wish he had made a clearer distinction between the roles of church and state in establishing norms for social behavior. In a secular, pluralistic society like ours, where church and state are legally separate and people (for the most part) like it that way, legislation in this area, and all areas, should permit as much freedom as possible, consistent with reasonable protection of citizens from exploitation and danger. Such legislation should not be subject to the will of any religious group. It is hard, of course, to know ahead of time what is "reasonable." We learn from experience. Dr. Ferm's first two concrete proposals seem eminently sensible. I suspect that abortion will inevitably become a form of birth control, much as we may deplore the fact, and therefore will need more state control than he suggests.

Church morality rests on different foundations: revelation and not social contract. In the area of sex, it seems unquestionable, at least to me, that the standards upheld by the church in the past have been partly based on biblical norms and partly on the standards of the pagan world into which Christianity was introduced. Those latter standards degraded sex and put women in a subordinate position. To the extent that the church's teaching has succeeded in conforming to the Christian norm of the love of God revealed in Christ — agape — it must continually be reaffirmed, even if it seems to be out of touch with contemporary life. *Justitia fiat, caelis delendis.*

Two thousand years of Christian experience in trying to understand this norm have confirmed the importance — so I would argue — of insisting on fidelity in marriage and on the undesirability of full sexual intimacy outside marriage (not of *any* sexual expressions outside marriage). It has also shown the necessity of revising our society's estimate of the status of women, as it required us to revise our views of slavery over a century ago. It is also demanding that we correct any notion that sex is nasty or evil.

The other area which invites comment is in the understanding of human nature. Dr. Ferm's article lacks a robust and realistic idea of the human lust for gratification and power — in a word, sin. The emergence of depersonalizing pornography, exploitive sex, abortion as sure-fire birth control, and other distortions as well, should surprise no one when these matters are completely free and unregulated.

Like Dr. Ferm, I would like to steer a middle course between undue restrictiveness and undue promiscuity, but I am much less sanguine about any society's ability to do so. I suspect that we all will move on a long-term cycle from one to the other, as in the past. Nevertheless, we surely must keep trying. And Sweden's example may be a helpful one at this time.

CHARLES P. PRICE
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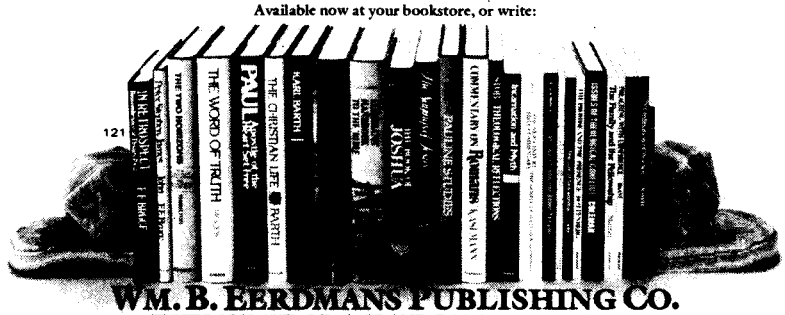

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